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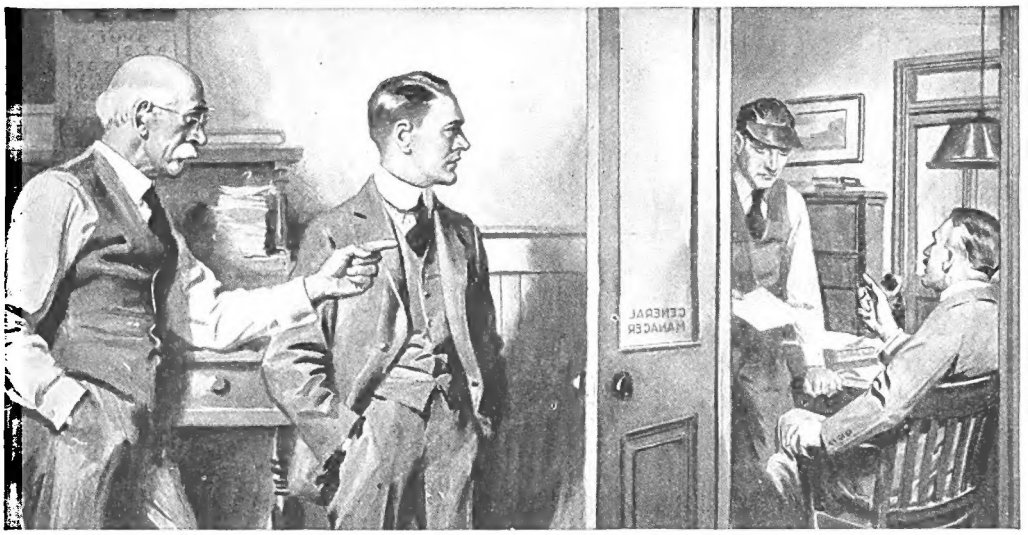

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ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor

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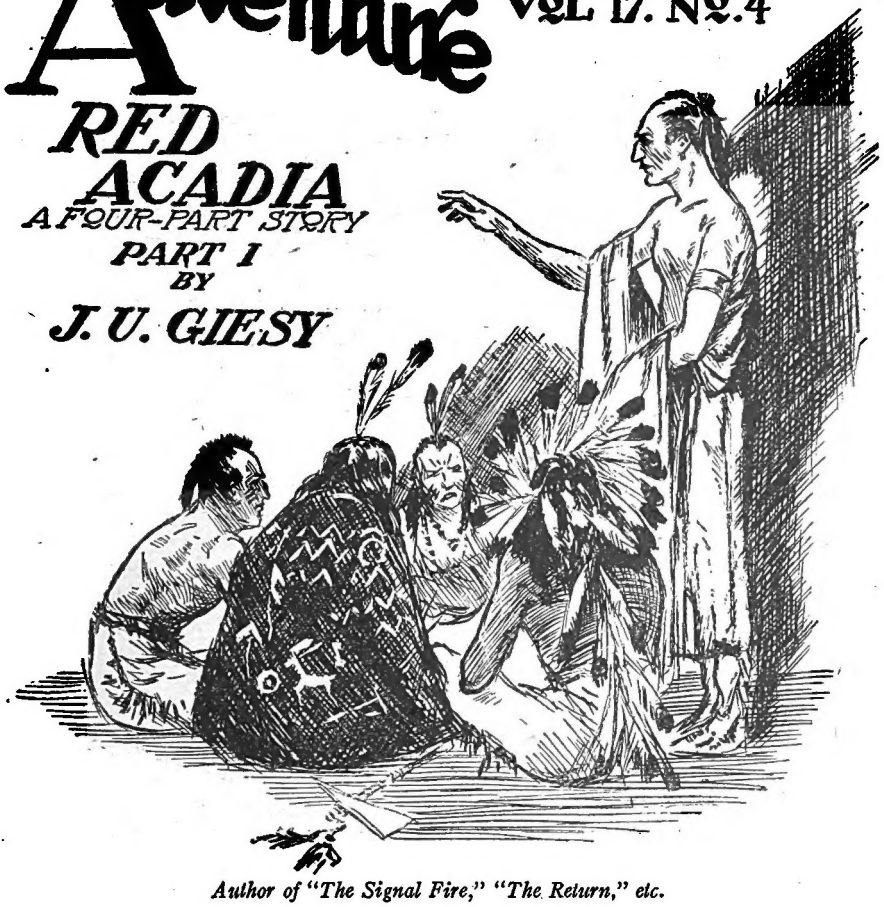
RED ACADIA

A FOUR-PART STORY

PART I



BY

J. U. GIESY

Author of "The Signal Fire," "The Return," etc.

I CALL myself Asher Wolf. Just what my original name may have been I do not know. Yet that I had another may be considered certain since so nearly as I can determine, I was two years of age when my foster-father Sheshequins—Little Rattle—brought me back from a border foray which cost my parents their lives.

Sheshequins was a Leni Lenape warrior, a Delaware of the Monsey Totem. And Monsey is, in English, Wolf. Now you see where I get my surname at least. For when a man knows not the name to which he was born, what better can he do than cling to the title of the clan wherein he grew to manhood, until such time as other changes threw him back again into the life of that race from which by blood he was sprung?

Sheshequins always said he saved me from having my brains dashed out against the trunk of a white-ash tree by a fellow warrior of the Monseys. He explained his act, by the fact that shortly before the beginning of the war party's march, Welsheetmonet as the Delawares called the Creator of all life, had frowned upon him and Mowaequa, my foster-mother to be. She gave birth to a still-born child. I looked a likely youngster to Little Rattle, and he formed in a flash the notion of preserving me to take the place of the male child which had never breathed.

Thus I came to be carried across the Ohio into the Northwest Territory and so I became one of those lost children of which more or less has been written from time to time.

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Little Rattle took me home to Mowaequa and Nashoba his first-born, whose name meant Gray Wolf; and at first he called me Oppiangwees—or "little white son". My first recollection of life is of my two dusky parents and my little brother and the life of the Delawares such as in those days it was. I was adopted by the rite of blood. I was a Delaware in all save birth. And I knew no difference until I grew old enough to ask questions and comprehend replies. And by then I was all Indian in training and it did not greatly matter to me since I was happy.

Why should I not have been happy? Of my bereavement I knew nothing. I was young, healthy. I had a brother by the blood rite which with the Indian is far more binding than even the birthright of the whites; and when I was nearly five, I had a sister also, born as the wild roses were in flower and called Keneancequa—Rosebud —therefore.

By then I was playing the games of childhood: "toss ball"—throwing my sphere of corn-husks into the air and catching it on a pointed stick—"snow snake" in Winter, footracing and swimming with Nashoba, the corn grain game, similar quite to the "odd or even," or the "button" game of the children of the whites. And since Nashoba and I were still too young to be considered anything save "little squaws", we had turns in minding Rosebud while Mowaequa and her friends among the women played the game of plum stones with their bits of carved and colored bones cast out of a bowl.

Yes, I was happy. Looking back I can not see wherein that childhood of mine spent on the banks of the Muskingum was in any essential less pure, less deirable than it might have been had I not become one of the "lost children", save that of book learning I had none of course. Even so I had learning of a sort.

Night after night Sheshequins spoke to Nashoba and me—giving us the code of our manhood, prescribing valor, endurance, healthy development, chastity as we grew older—to respect all women, and know but one, when the time came for that. He spoke of Welsheetmonet, the Great Spirit who was all good. To Him we owed clean lives, an honest tongue and a brave heart. Teaching was by precept largely, though we learned a simple mathematics with sticks or bits of reed or pebbles and shells.

"See yonder man," Sheshequins would say. "He is a good man. Be like him my sons;" or; "he is not well regarded by any true Delaware. Do nothing which he does if you would win your fellow man's respect. Respect the aged", Sheshequins would say. "Surely are they loved of the Great Spirit to have lived so long in a world of peril."

Odd words you will say for a painted savage—a savage painted far more savage by the whites, I am forced in justice to proclaim, than he really was. For my foster-father had much my white neighbors might emulate today. Never was I beaten for error. Corporal punishment was rare. Paternal love was the custom. To care for his children was the father's duty, until they were of age to care for themselves.

These things I mention to explain why in all truth I can say that I loved Sheshequins, and Mowaequa my foster-father and mother, and Nashoba my brother by the rite of blood, and my sister Rosebud, beyond any power of denial. Aye, I loved them, and save that one came into my life, whom I loved even more than they, I perhaps should be one of them still, rather than Asher Wolf.

And I look back on my boyhood now with naught but pleasure—to my first practise with the bow, to the games with other groups of growing youths, to my first kill of a roving buffalo which in those days still roamed along the Ohio.

It was for that I received my second name. Sheshequins held a name feast to which he bade all his closest friends. And after all had been eaten as custom required, and the bowls were scooped clean, he led me forth and described my prowess in slaying the buffalo with a purloined rifle, and placed the "rattle of adoption" in my hands —the bestowal of that childish toy upon one of another race or tribe, signifying full admission to the clan or family which made the gift.

Thereafter he said a prayer to Welsheetmonet above my head, and since his own son was known as Gray Wolf, and I was a child of the whites, he declared the Great Spirit had put it into his heart to call me Waopduksit or the White Wolf, by which name I was to be known thereafter to all the tribe.

As Waopduksit, I was now privileged to wear my buckskin breeches and a loose sleeveless shirt, if I so desired, though

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Nashoba and I generally bothered little about the latter garment when roaming the forests and fields. As Waopduksit I was privileged to sit and listen to the tales of the warriors and the story-tellers and dream of a time when I too as a warrior would take the trail and do deeds of prowess such as I heard described.

Then, thought I, I would have the light hair which marked me among my fellows as did my gray eyes also, plucked out with tweezers or burned to the scalp with hot stones, leaving no more than a scalp-lock tuft. And that would be yellow, and constitute a double dare to the enemy to take it if he could, marking me a warrior of the warriors when my time should come to prove my worth. For whether it be generally known or not, the scalp-lock was worn for that reason alone. It was a means of holding the scalp of a foe, while it was torn from the skull. The warrior wore it proudly as a badge of his courage, since it must be protected by his own strength as a man.

And as Waopduksit I was privileged to take part in all the man's games of the tribe, and the festivals for both sexes, and because I had a good ear for tempo as a musician would call it, I was always given a rattle at the musical feasts. They were made of shells of different sorts in which grains of corn or pebbles were placed in graded sizes so that each rattle gave out a different note or tone. And they were shaken in time, so as to run a sort of scale to which one might sing or dance.

I was privileged also to possess a rifle, with which Nashoba and I grew very proficient in time. Hence I think that in those days the name of Waopduksit made me feel my manhood, and seemed in some subtle way to speak of the bond of blood between Nashoba and me as, white wolf and gray wolf, we grew into man's estate.

LOOKING back it seems like the hand of Welsheetmonet in the whole story of my life, as of course it was. Sheshequins meant Little Rattle, and the rattle was the symbol of adoption. Mowaequa my foster-mother's name meant "daughter of the wolves". And the gray wolf was my brother and the "white wolf" was my name, the last part of which I have kept.

Even in the adoption of Asher, brave Heckwelder followed the Indian custom, as I must now explain. When I came to the Half Way House, as the three Moravian villages along the Tuscarawas were called, and Heckwelder recognized me as a white, and another and the greatest motive of all crept into my life, I once more changed my name after a time to something nearer the type of that used among men of the race to which I was born.

But I told Heckwelder my story as I knew it, and he picked on the ash tree incident, wherein Sheshequins had saved my life, as the one from which to draw the Christian title by which I should be known.

Esche is the German word for ash; and it isn't so far from that to the Biblical Asher, as one may easily comprehend. And since *Esche* didn't exactly fit, and no name was better to Heckwelder's mind than one drawn from the Bible, why he baptized me thus, and made me Asher Wolf.

All that however came later, since in my early life my dreams were all of war and the hunt as they naturally would be. Sheshequins being of that part of our tribe, dominated wholly by the words of Captain Pipe, leader of the Leni Lenape war clan, and utterly opposed to the neutral and peaceful party of which Glickhican was the head. As Sheshequins said often in my hearing, Glickhican's heart had turned to water.

Small wonder he should have thought so either, since war was his creed. And there were many like him, who looked with amazement, sorrow and distrust upon the action of that mightiest of our warriors, when he laid down the rifle and hatchet and became a convert to the teachings of the Half Way House. Glickhican a man of peace! The thought was impossible to one who did not understand.

Nor did I understand myself in those earlier days. Of course I knew of the Moravian settlements in our midst; knew as we all did of the councils, the bickerings which had finally resulted in the splitting of our nation into two parties; knew that they had been invited to our country in the first place by Pankanke, chief of the Wolf clan himself, and later by Netawatwes who became head chief after him. Those things were common talk. But there was much other talk common as well. Much of it came from the wandering traders, who threaded our country with the goods of the whites.

According to them Zeisberger and Heckwelder, the teachers, while they preached

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the Christian religion, the ways of peace, the love of fellowman rather than his slaying, were doing so merely to throw their Indian converts off their guard and later betray and sell them as slaves to the Cherokee tribe. And another rumor was that they were in reality spies from the American colonies beyond the Ohio, the Kitchimocomans or Long Knives as they were called. Nor was the belief in this latter claim confined to our tribe.

The Hurons and their sub-tribe the Wyandots with which latter we were allied, considered them as Colonial spies and really against the great king of the British, whose governor lived at Detroit. It was indeed from such belief that the name of Half Way House came to be grafted upon the Moravian towns. They were half-way between the Long Knife country and the settlements of the English. By both white nations they were regarded as in sympathy with the other, largely I think now because they made no distinction in their treatment of members of either, but treated all men who came near them alike.

Perhaps it were best here to explain that the Delawares like the Mohicans were of the Great Algonquin family tribes and hence were never fully in sympathy with the tribes of the Iroquois Confederation.

That their leaning if any was really toward the Americans, however was finally shown as early as 1775, since at a council in the Fall of that year between the border tribes and the whites, it was largely their influence and that of the members of our tribe who had accepted their teachings, which caused the Delawares to declare for a neutral policy in the war Great Britain was seeking to precipitate upon the border whites even then, and a speaker of the Six Nations or Iroquois to taunt us with our act.

Koguethagechton or White Eyes, replied with disdain:

"I know well that you consider us a conquered nation—as women, as your inferiors. You have, you say, shortened our legs and put petticoats upon us. You say you have given us a hoe and a corn pounder and told us to plant and pound for you—your men—your warriors. But look at me. Am I not full grown? Have I not a warrior's dress? Aye! I am a man and these are the arms of a man, and all that country—he gestured toward the west—is mine.

"I have taken measures of peace it is true, with a view of saving my tribe from destruction. But if you think me wrong—if you give more credit to runaway vagabonds than to your friends, to a man, a warrior, a Delaware—if you insist upon fighting the Americans, go and I will go with you. And I will not go like a bear hunter who sets his dogs on the bear to be beaten about by its paws. I will lead you, but—I will not survive my nation—I will not live to bewail the miserable destruction of a brave people who deserved as you do, a better fate."

It was this speech which caused the final rupture in our tribe. Captain Pipe who though a great warrior and very ambitious was not the political equal of White Eyes, and the war party of our tribe, held that so bold a speech must not only anger the powerful Six Nations but arouse the suspicions of the English as well in regard to our allegiance, since it kept the Delawares out of the tribal assault on the American frontier which the British had planned. In this last much which followed proved them right I still think.

Unable to overcome the influence of Netawatwes, White Eyes, Killbuck, another of the peace party, and Glickhican, Pipe left our town of Goschocking at the junction of the Tuscarawas and Walhonding Rivers and forsaking the tribal council established a town some fifteen miles up the latter stream. With them went our family, Sheshequins being I think filled with an even greater disgust than Captain Pipe himself.

But the majority of the tribe remained behind and the influence of the Moravian teaching persisted and spread, so that while the war of the Revolution went on, and war parties marched past and were entertained and fed in a liberal fashion, yet our people did not take any active part in the war itself, despite the fact that the Wyandots our allies, and the Shawnees to the south and west, with whom we were at peace, were constantly seeking to induce our participation in their attacks on the whites. It is true that Pipe did lead small parties on one or more occasion as part of some expedition. But the tribe itself as a tribe steadfastly refused to be drawn in.

How terrific was the influence wielded by these Christian teachers at that time may be imagined from the fact that it thus resisted not only reports of the dissatisfaction of the British at Detroit, through

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a mission sent to interview Governor Hamilton, but also the direct appeal of the Wyandot embassy which appeared with the blue wampum—the war belt, asking our help.

Glickhican himself told the Wyandots that, "the Delawares had engaged to hold the chain of friendship with both hands, and therefore could not spare a hand to take hold of the war belt." The embassy went home enraged. A little later Pomoacan, half-king of the nation appeared at Goschocking himself on a similar errand. Glickhican gave him and his men a feast, explained the Delaware's position and appealed to the Wyandot to consider the Moravians as "his own body and love them as cousins."

Pomoacan was impressed. He told Glickhican that his words "had entered his heart."

"Go on," said he, "and obey your teachers, attend to your worship and fear no harm. You see us indeed going to war, but you may remain easy and think no more about it."

He sent back word of his covenant to the tribal council of his nation at Sandusky, declaring he had acknowledged the white brothers to be "as his fathers" and asking that no more war parties be allowed to disturb them in the future as they had in the past.

Even more remarkable was Glickhican's success in breaking up a raiding party the following year. The British governor sent a Huron chief to ravage the Ohio. He had known Glickhican during the French war. He stopped near the Moravian towns and sent in word. Glickhican had him brought into town with his captains and made them a speech.

"God commands," he said: "'Thou shalt not kill. Love thy enemies. Pray for them.' Can it be supposed that He who created man should not be offended when we destroy each other? When we were accomplices, brother, each strove to outdo the other in murder, because we knew no better. You and I were friends when young. Now that we are old let us do alike and put away from us what is bad and forbidden by God—the killing of God's creatures."

The Huron was so affected that he replied he would open his heart. He would go within a day's march of the Ohio, capture a single prisoner, send him back to the "father" at Detroit—the governor—with charge that he be not hurt, and would thereafter return to the governor the hatchet the latter had "forced upon him," and would see to it that no single life was taken by his men on their foray.

In the meantime Sheshequins and our family were living in the Walhonding town of Pipe, so that I saw little of what really went on, since Sheshequins frowned on so much as a visit even to the town of the "praying Indians" as we of the war party sarcastically named the rest of our tribe. But despite a gradually growing influence Pipe was exerting, and the parties he sometimes led with Wyandot bands, I failed of putting into action those dreams of the war path I had formed in my youth, accounts of which I drank in with avid ears, whenever the chance occurred.

HOWEVER in 1777 Netawatwes died, and in 1778, White Eyes followed him to the grave. This left only Glickhican and Killbuck opposed to Pipe, and the tribe torn by internal dissensions arising purely on the question of peace or war. As if to aid our party, as it appeared at the time, 1778 saw the arrival in our country of three men who had been held by the Americans at Pittsburg on the charge of trying to incite Indian war in the British interests.

These men were McKee, Elliott, and Simon Girty. They had escaped from the Americans. They knew all the Indian tribes. They were filled with hatred of the cross-river whites, and were sworn to revenge. McKee was appointed agent and manager of the district in which we lived by the British governor at Detroit. He and the others took Captain Pipe into their councils at once. Inside a few weeks they were circulating reports regarding the intentions of the Americans toward the Indians in our country. They revived the old story of threatened enslavement, the proving false of which had been one of White Eyes' last triumphs, at a time when the entire nation had nearly joined hands in a panic regarding it, some months before.

Now they added to the rumor the statement that White Eyes had been taken away by the Great Spirit, in order that his influence removed, the nation might be saved. I know Pipe leaned himself to this conception and I know that my foster-father really

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believed it to be true. On top of it, McKee and Elliott, the latter now serving as a captain under the former, gave it out that the governor at Detroit was determined to punish all Indians, the Moravian converts not excepted, who would not declare war on the Americans at once.

Looking back one can see how their personal hatred of their fellow whites, made these men stoop to any subterfuge to hurl the red men on the border towns. But in those days it all seemed very real to us. One can understand now too, how the missionaries became the special object of hatred to these men, since they were the stumbling-block to their design. But in those days it seemed to us of the Leni Lenape that we were caught between the two forces of American design and British displeasure. One can understand therefore perhaps how the spirit of unrest, fear, distrust, and conjecture crept into our daily life.

In fact so bitter became the discussions in council and so markedly did Pipe's advocacy of war increase, that Killbuck and his party were driven from the town of Goschocking and compelled to flee to Pittsburgh for safety. Pipe at the same time, having gained his point to that extent, yet fearing that he might be attacked by the Americans as a result of Killbuck's flight, removed his entire section of the tribe to the Wyandot settlement, not far from Pomoacan's town, at Upper Sandusky, for a greater safety until he could foster the next step in his plans.

This left the Moravian settlements on the Tuscarawas practically deserted of all save the converts themselves and those who still believed in the peace they preached.

It is a strange sidelight on human nature indeed that the Moravians had nothing to fear from the Indians, but much from the very whites toward whom they felt friendship, and whom they had done so much to protect from the horrors of war.

The British eyed them with suspicion. The Americans regarded them as probably British spies, though Heaven knows why, unless as with us of the Leni Lenape tribe, there too the forked tongue was busy, spreading a tissue of lies. In fact the true peril of these people was put into prophetic words to them, by Pachgantschillilas, one of our war chiefs, whom Pipe sent to Gnadenhutten, one of their towns, to arrest Killbuck after his flight and before it was known he had made his full escape to Pittsburgh.

Our chief told them he did not "reproach them for their love of peace rather than war," and he urged them to go with him to a "secure place" where they might worship and conduct themselves beyond harm. He said—

"Think on what I have told you, and believe me that if you stay where you are, one day or another the Long Knives will in their usual way, speak fair words to you but at the same time murder you none the less."

But they did not listen. They could not believe it, I suppose. They stayed on, while the forces against them, McKee and his infamous understrappers, Elliott and Girty, and the horde of low, uncivilized frontiersmen and traders, more cruel God knows than any Indian ever born, worked for their undoing through 1779 and 1780, and on into 1781. Our own chief, Pipe, too I think had much to do with what happened in the end. He had grown more and more bitter over what he felt was the shame, the weakening, the feminizing of his tribe.

To the Moravians he assigned the main brunt of the cause which had produced the result of peace. Against them his hatred was at that time intense. It was fed by the whites with whom he was hand in glove. His statements and reports to the governor at Detroit had much to do with his final action toward the Half Way Houses—an action which was destined to change the entire course of my own existence and make me in the end, no longer the White Wolf, but Asher Wolf instead.

CHAPTER II

LET the causes of his action be what they may, Major De Peyster, commandant at Detroit and governor by courtesy, resolved in the Summer of 1781 to rid himself of the Moravian settlements. He authorized McKee to attend to the matter, which was what the white fiend wanted, and McKee sent word to the council of the Six Nations to see to it at once.

In their usual wary manner they in turn passed the word to the Ottawas and Chippewas to manage it without delay. These two tribes however refused, declaring that the Christian Indians had done them no harm and given no cause for an attack upon their part.

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McKee then called upon Pomoacan the Wyandot to undertake the task. Pomoacan sent back a question. He demanded to know whether the action was aimed toward destroying these members of an allied tribe or toward saving them from certain destruction by the whites such as rumor alleged was threatened.

McKee replied that he would meet Pomoacan and discuss the matter. I suppose he must have scented the fact that the Wyandot chief might be made a tool to his hands and wanted to see to the making himself. At any rate he appeared one day at our town and invited Captain Pipe to attend the council to which our leader speedily agreed.

Nashoba reported the whole thing to me the same day when I came in from a morning spent catching fish. By that time I was a man fully grown, versed in all the woodcraft and trailcraft of my adopted race, a good shot, swift of foot, and now that Pipe was the dominant leader of our tribe, once more beginning to dream of distinguishing myself in war.

"Tomorrow we go to Pomoacan's town, my brother," Nashoba said as I tossed down my catch.

"Say you so?" I questioned eying him with interest since I had noted some new excitement in the town when I arrived.

"Aye," he nodded. "And the trail may lead farther still. An agent of the British father at Detroit has come to speak with our chief. The word is that they go for a council with the Wyandot, concerning the praying Indians and their disposal."

"And our father goes with Pipe?" I questioned farther.

"Aye."

His eyes flashed.

"Good words," I assented and smiled as my mind leaped ahead to all this thing might mean, the trail, and later—possibly the Delawares no longer disrupted by factions but reunited and at war.

Nor was I surprised at my brother and myself being included in the party which would visit the Wyandot town. Remember that there was no more ardent supporter of the war party in our clan than my foster-father, and that a tribal chieftain rarely went anywhere on such a mission as this one promised to be, without some considerable number of tribesmen in his train, and let it explain how we two younger men found ourselves units of the party of McKee, Elliott, Girty and Pipe, which set out the next day for the Wyandot town.

It may not be amiss however to say a word about these men. McKee whose own place was at Oldstown on the Sciota, in the Shawnee country, was large, raw-boned, of a sinister cast of countenance, what one of his own race might have called "dour" in appearance. He was a man naturally cruel, naturally revengeful, yet lacking the courage to carry out his own revenge, since he took no active part beyond its fostering from first to last.

Elliott on the other hand was slighter in build, inclined to a blond complexion, a typical Saxon type as to hair and eyes, hence a more seemable person on first inspection, though in no way lacking in those qualities which made him a companion and associate of McKee's.

Girty, I hardly need describe. He was small as compared to the others, dark, savage, with the face of a slinking fox, shifty-eyed, thin of lip—the face of the renegade he was.

White though I am, I must admit that for true manhood, Captain Pipe, the Delaware, for all which has been said of the red man, was the most seemly person in the group which met at Pomoacan's house.

Of the journey of a few miles to his town there is little to tell. We traversed a country studded with elm, hickory, ash, beech, maple and wild cherry, interspersed with open tracts in one of which along the banks of the Sandusky River the village was placed. It had a population of several hundred and they mostly turned out to meet us, since our arrival was an important matter in their eyes.

Pomoacan made it a ceremonial occasion, coming from the town to accord us a welcome. He was in full regalia, his kilt of finest doeskin, elaborately wrought with beadwork and porcupine quills dyed in several hues, his leggings of buckskin, his moccasins crusted with colors until the leather could hardly be seen. It being July he wore no shirt, but an elaborate mantle also embroidered hung from his shoulders, a necklace of bear's claws shone on his breast, and he wore a bonnet of golden eagle feathers each studded at its stem with a bit of the fur of the beaver, that being the totem of both the Huron and Wyandot tribes.

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He took us into town and to a feast, after which the pipe was passed, and the younger members of the party, among whom were Nashoba and myself, left the house, threw off all clothing save the *unsean* or breechclout and engaged the young Wyandots in friendly contests of agility and strength, while our elders threshed matters out. What happened therefore I know only by hearsay, but as I had it from the lips of Sheshequins himself I have never doubted its truth.

Pomoacan sat among a group of his subchiefs. McKee, Elliott, Girty and Pipe with Sheshequins and several others of our captains, formed another group facing the other. The chief of the Wyandots rose.

"YOU are come as the mouthpiece of the father at Detroit and I bid you welcome," he addressed the three whites. "And you," he inclined his head to Pipe and the other Delawares, "I welcome also, my brothers of the Leni Lenape tribe. You who speak for the father have asked me to do something for the father, and I have asked in return a question to which you are come to bear the answer now.

"But hark ye. I ask you also to remember that I have gone to the towns of the praying people myself, and have sat in the houses on the Tuscarawas, and have listened to the words of their head men and teachers, and I have heard nothing save what is good from the lips of those men, and spoken with fair tongues, so that at that time I sent word to my own people that those people were good and were not to be molested, and that because of that I had taken their teachers into my heart and had said that they should be to me as my fathers. And a man does not do harm to his father, but if he may he does good, that he may thereby merit the respect of all men.

"Also remember that I have told those people these things and have passed my word that no harm shall come upon them through me or my tribe. Wherefore I ask you again if what you plan is for the good of these men who prefer peace to war, or rather because they have displeased the father at Detroit by refusing to take the hatchet he offered, or because of some tale told by singing birds whose words are words of air?"

This was hardly the sort of speech McKee had expected and he was no diplomat whatever else he may have been. His answer nearly broke up the council before it was well under way. He replied:

"It is not for an ally of the father at Detroit to ask questions, when an order is given. These men are believed to be spies of the Long Knives seeking to open the way for them to come and take the lands on this side of the great river. The father at Detroit desires them removed because they are a dangerous and troublesome folk, and trouble makers who interfere with his plans.

"It was they who held back the Delawares from doing his bidding while the two black clouds of his people and the Americans drew together these last five years. They it was turned the blood in the veins of the Delawares to water, and save for Captain Pipe had made them as women ere now."

Pomoacan frowned.

"The Wyandots do nothing for the telling," he growled in response. "As for these people being spies, is it not true that the Long Knives regard them also as friends of your father at Detroit? Have you not been among the Americans long enough to know this to be true? Speak to me now from your heart rather than with the lips. Do not stop my ears to the true purpose in what you propose."

That was rather a flick to McKee who had been a prisoner at Pittsburgh and he opened his mouth to retort when Elliott stayed him and answered in his stead:

"What Pomoacan has said is true. We have not said that these people were spies, but that the father at Detroit so thought them. We admit that the Long Knives are equally opposed to them, believing them the father's children at heart. They are therefore as a grain of corn caught between the stone and the pounder. Therein lies their danger—their chance of no longer remaining in peace at that place. The father at Detroit is not one to listen to the song of singing birds, yet does he know that these men have kept the Leni Lenape from taking his hatchet, and held them to the ways of peace, thereby interfering with those things he had planned."

Pomoacan smiled slightly, as Elliott sat down. He had a certain craft of his own, and I fancy he noted how quickly Elliott had risen to take advantage of the excuse

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for action he himself had prepared in his opening words.

"Peace appears not so bad for them," he said dryly. "They have full storehouses and plenty of cattle, and always enough to give with a liberal hand to any passing party of war. Their paths are always open from one nation to another. While we have suffered no grass to grow on the war-path at the bidding of the father in Detroit, many good things have grown in the fields where they toil undisturbed."

Girty cursed baldly.

"Woman's work," he sneered. "Have the Delawares no higher ambition than to dig potatoes and hoe corn?"

Captain Pipe fairly sprang to his feet. Girty's words had stung him on a long-sensitive point as no doubt the renegade meant they should. He flung out his arm and beckoned to the Wyandot chief.

"Look this way my brother," he cried. "Join with us. We are not all women, we Delawares—yet. Our blood has not all turned to water in our veins. And we desire it not to do so. You say these people are good. I do not deny it, in that they have done no act of violence against any one in the land. But—they have led away my people from the way of our fathers. They have made us weak—a sport on the tongues of the nations.

"They have kept us from giving that help the father at Detroit expected from the Leni Lenape, and in so doing have made him suspicious of us as well as of them. As our white cousin Elliott says, they are suspected of both sides. Wherefore let us remove them to some other place as the father asks, that we may prove our loyalty to our treaties and free the Delawares from this cause of dissension which has torn them for years."

Pomoacan considered after Pipe sat down. In the end he spoke again:

"You have said good words, my brother of the Delawares. Your words have entered my heart. Yet would I weigh them and my action further, before I make answer. Give me therefore a little time."

Oh, yes, he was crafty, was Pomoacan. He wanted to turn the thing and twist it in every conceivable angle before he committed himself to the action desired by McKee and his fellows and Pipe. No doubt he felt it would be of advantage to him to do so, yet he desired to appear to keep faith also with his pledges given to the teachers long before. He wanted to weigh all the advantages to himself and determine just what should be his position. When he had done that, he would decide.

The council temporarily broke up. We young men at our games, saw our party come forth alone. We edged closer trying to hear what was said, without actually intruding. Elliott was speaking to McKee in what seemed almost a manner of anger. McKee's face was dark. Girty wore his usual sneer. But Pipe was as nearly excited as an Indian might become.

At the time, I think he was quite sincere. I think he believed that he saw a way to rid the Delawares of the presence of the missionaries and once more weld the nation into a powerful unit. And I know that was his dream of years—his main desire. He would have liked nothing better than to lead the tribe to war and make its name a thing to fear.

Now he flung back his mantle and swung his copper-colored arm. He was naked to the waist and no Indian could ever talk without his hands.

"He has harkened unto my voice," he burst forth with flashing eyes and thin drawn nostrils. "They shall be removed and set down in a new place, and the Delawares shall be Delawares again. My cousins, give me a part in this when the time is come."

His words showed the regard in which we of the tribes held the whites present at that council. An Indian never addressed a companion by his given name when speaking in formal fashion. Instead he used the term signifying the degree of esteem in which the other was held. Father was first of course, then followed brother, and cousin was next. It will appear therefore that while McKee and his fellows swayed the tribes of the Northwest at that time, they were no more respected than any other men of their stripe in themselves, and that what weight was given to their arguments and wishes was accorded to them as agents of the British, rather than in any other sense.

Nashoba nudged me in the ribs with an elbow as Pipe spoke.

"It is to be as this McKee wishes then," he whispered. "There will be something to do, my brother, ere long."

I nodded. I confess I hoped his words

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were good words—that is to say true. Remember I had been taught to hold the Moravian converts in contempt, and that I was young. If, as Pipe suggested, the tribe be once more united, Nashoba and I might both get a chance to go to war and prove ourselves something besides mere hunters of game. Hence I strained my ears as McKee replied—

"Good words, my brother, thou and the Wyandots will have a part, should the chief hearken to the words of the father at Detroit, and a party of the Shawnees if he so desires."

Once more Pipe's eyes shone in anticipation.

"Then shall we cast the hatchet into the skies, when they are removed."

He folded his arms.

I saw Sheshequins nod his head at the words, which meant simply that with the Moravians gone, the Delawares would enter the war and carry it through to the bitter end. I turned my eyes and nudged Nashoba who was standing all ears, in turn. He looked at me and we both knew the other's thought. Oh, yes, we were young, hot-blooded. We were to have our chance at last if Pomoacan consented, and the Half Way House was removed from our tribal lands. Or so we thought then.

One of the Wyandot captains appeared in the door of the house and beckoned our party to return.

They stalked in through the door and we youths, now that we had a taste of what must soon be decided, did not return to our games but squatted down to await the breaking up of the council, jabbering among ourselves in speculation as to just what would be done with the Moravians and their teachers and how soon we would be going to war and gathering scalps, and how long hostilities would last.

Once more I give the final result in Sheshequins' words.

The whites and the Delawares returned, Pomoacan again rose to his feet.

"My cousins, and my brothers of the Delawares," he began; "I have weighed well your words, and no longer can I be kept in the dark as to the purpose back of them. I am aware that my cousins do not like these praying men of the Delaware tribe or their teachers, and I am fully informed that the Long Knives view them with suspicion. And I have my cousins' word that the father at Detroit has ordered them removed.

"Wherefore it seems to me that these Christian Indians are in danger from all sides, and that my duty is to befriend them even as I have said to them that I would. And how may a man better befriend his fathers, than by assuring their safety from harm? Wherefore I am minded to give ear to the words of the father at Detroit and perform the task he has been pleased to assign me, that these good men may be saved from the violence of them who hate them, and not be destroyed.

"Yet, that when I go among them on this errand they may be caused to believe that which I shall say and think me not one who speaks with a double tongue, I am minded further to ask my white cousins to bear me company on this mission, and confirm the words they have spoken, that I may not seem to act from my own wishes in this matter, but as an agent merely, under their command."

SURELY it was well thought out. He meant to divide the responsibility or shift it rather—make it appear that he had no choice in doing what he was about, while at the same time he fulfilled the wishes of Major de Peyster and McKee.

When he had finished, McKee, Elliott and Girty whispered together for a time. McKee then rose.

"It is well," he declared. "The words of Pomoacan are good. It shall be as he desires. Indeed we shall give much more than he asks. Captain Elliott shall go with him to represent the father at Detroit and confirm the words he shall speak. His brother of the Delawares, one of their own people, shall lead a band of his party to his support. Myself I pledge him a party of my own brothers, the Shawnees, and my brother Girty speaks for a band from the Ottawas as well, that they too may show their obedience to the wishes of the father at Detroit.

"These then shall constitute the expedition, but since Pomoacan has been the one to bow to the wishes of the father from a full heart, his shall be the command. And through him the Wyandots shall gain the pleasure of the father and be counted his faithful allies against the black cloud of the Long Knives which they have forced

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upon the father's father across the great water, these many years."

An odd speech for McKee. I have always thought Elliott, who was far more crafty, inspired it. It had the sound of his fairness of speech which never meant anything more than sound, yet was always tuned in those days to the gaining of his ends.

But Pomoacan assented when McKee came to a pause—

"Good," said he without rising to reply, and the thing was settled in all save the date.

That was fixed next, for a time so soon as the parties of the Ottawas and Shawnees could reach Pomoacan's town. Elliott was to remain there pending their arrival. Girty went to the Ottawas to bear the word and McKee returned to Oldstown to dispatch the men he had pledged.

The council broke up. Our party appeared. Nashoba and I sprang to our feet. One glance at the faces of Pipe and Sheshequins was enough. Both showed satisfaction. Nashoba and I turned to each other. Our hands met. In that instant both of us determined to be of the party when it set forth. I know my own heart pounded and I suspect the Gray Wolf's did too. This would be our first touch of anything like a real expedition. It fired our imaginations. Nashoba slipped to the side of his father and spoke him briefly. Then he was back with me.

"I have heard the news," he said in an eager tone, meaning thereby that his information was official. "Chief Pipe leads our men with Pomoacan to that place. Our father goes and I have asked that we accompany him on the trail. He has promised it shall be so, my brother. Is it not good?"

"Aye! It is good," I accepted far more calmly than I felt, yet in the fashion of showing small emotion as I had been taught.

The rest of the day passed in games and feasting, in the former of which I confess we younger Delawares took good pains to impress the young women of the Wyandots with our agility, strength and skill. That evening huge bonfires were lighted and there was a dance, or dances I should say perhaps, since there was a series in which both the men and maidens of the Wyandots and our tribe took part.

Part of the time I danced—generally in the mixed dances wherein the girls were allowed to choose their partners such as the duck dance and the trotting dance. And part of the time, I played the rattle, because of my skill with that.

I make no denial of the fact that I enjoyed dancing with the Indian girls. Perhaps that was my white blood. I liked them although no one better than another. It may seem strange that up to this time, although I was long past the age for marriage, no woman had awakened the desire for her in my heart. Past twenty I was still fancy free, and rather an object of curiosity and pique to the girls of our tribe. Nashoba had been married two years and had a child.

Yet I liked the sex immensely, though I had not picked on any one individual from among the rest. And I could have had my pick. The Indian girl was a rather complacent sweetheart. She expected marriage as her lot, and rarely knew her husband long before marriage; sometimes never so much as saw him before she was his wife. Perhaps that too was a reason for my single state. The white man prefers to court the woman he weds. Still, I suppose I might have married in time, had Nashoba and I not made that journey to the Half Way House.

But I was not thinking of marriage as I played the rattle or danced that night when some maiden picked out my yellow hair and chose me for her partner by the simple process of grabbing my hand and leading me forth. Rather I was thinking of the trip to come and the war to follow, wherein I should show my prowess, and garner scalps and win such fame as I knew of then.

We danced half the night and the next day returned to Pipe's town which we had built after our removal from the Delaware country in the tribal fashion. I may take our house as an example of the rest. It was twenty feet wide and some thirty feet long, framed of peeled poles, braced and strengthened with rafters, and walled with heavy slabs of bark, cut from trees, spread out and dried flat to make boards. The roof was also of bark, laid very much in the nature of the shingles on the houses of the whites.

Inside were wide benches along the walls, used as seats by day and couches by night. Fires were lighted in a circle of stones beneath a smoke-hole in the roof. We kept our supplies of corn and dried meat hung from the rafters of the roof. Throughout

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that section of the country, most of the Algonquin and Iroquois tribes inhabited similar structures grouped into villages and towns.

Nashoba and his wife and child lived with us in those days, and there was a bustle of preparation so soon as we got home.

That night Nashoba and I sat outside the house smoking our pipes and discussing coming events.

"If only the Long Knives would take a notion to come out against the praying Indians, when we were at their places," said my brother, "you and I might get a taste of real war. Myself I should welcome their coming. Never have I taken a scalp and I am past twenty Summers and have given life to a child without taking that of any man. Were ever such things heard of before? What am I to tell my son of his father, when he grows to be a man?"

"Tell him the truth, my brother."

Rosebud our sister had come forth unheard and let herself down to listen to our conversation. There was little formality in our home life, and the girls and women spoke as freely in the family circle as the men.

"The truth is not always pleasant to hear, wherefore singing birds find ready listeners, my sister," Nashoba growled.

"You are not a woman to speak so," Rosebud replied. "If the Long Knives came and took your scalp instead of your taking theirs, what would White Feather your mate have to tell your son?"

Nashoba grunted in return and began to sing:

> Do not weep for me
> Loved woman, should I die.
> For yourselves alone should you weep,
> Poor are ye all and to be pitied;
> Ye women are to be pitied.

He broke off with a chuckle.

"But they are more apt to take White Wolf's scalp, which is such a pretty yellow, and shines among the tribe like the berries of the ash among its leaves."

CHAPTER III

YET it was the tenth day of the month of "roasting ears," August, as I have since learned to call it, before our expedition actually came to the then principal Moravian town of Salem, on the Tuscarawas.

There had been delay, waiting for the Shawnee party and that from the Ottawas as well. In fact so tardy were these two tribes in fulfiling the promises made by McKee and Girty that Pomoacan finally started without them, leaving word behind him that they should follow. This they finally did, with the result that not all had arrived at Salem and Gnadenhütten until several days after Pipe and Pomoacan had gone into council with the Moravians themselves. In the end, however, about three hundred warriors gathered and went into camp.

The weather at that time of year being very pleasant, we traveled light. Most of our men wore, at most, leggings and a robe and carried their rifles, knives and hatchets which last had now taken the place of the former tomahawk. Subsistence on the trail had been mainly on the game we shot as we marched, eked out by the wild potato, then growing in profusion and easily dug, plus berries, which at that season were ripe. Neither Pipe nor Pomoacan expected the task assigned them to take long, and neither prepared for any continued stay.

I had seen the Moravian towns before as a child, mainly Lichtenau which had stood three miles below our own town of Goschocking, before Pipe had withdrawn his band up the Walhonding years before. Hence Salem was no unusual spectacle to my eyes. The Moravians always laid out their settlements in the same way.

The first house built was the church, of hewn logs, with a small tower above it, in which hung the bell. Every evening this was rung for the daily service, which was a part of their creed. For the rest, there was always a huge assembly hall or "Long House" for use in public meetings not of a religious nature, and the native dwellings, always of logs, each set in a plot of ground large enough for a garden, and generally surrounded by a fence of poles.

These houses were set along the sides of the two main streets, crossing at right angles, at a point where the church had been built. In addition to the other buildings there was always too, a school, where the children of the converts were taught.

The whole plan of the towns was simple, wholesome, clean. The plan of the inhabitants' lives was one of a cooperative interest. Much of their property, in fact, was owned in common—the products of their

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fields being gathered into general storehouses and drawn upon for subsistence by all alike, since the land was jointly held and the dwellings were the property of the town. Cattle, however, were individual possessions, as were the foodstuffs raised in individual gardens, articles of wearing apparel and the common utensils of life.

Recalling it now from my greater years, it seems to me that an actual atmosphere of homely peace and comfort hovered then over those towns. The simplicity of life was the simplicity of purity and peace itself. In fact, so simple were those people that their very simplicity was mistaken by others for duplicity instead. So is the good, the true, the beneficent oft times mistaken—by men into whose hearts those qualities have not crept—for the deepest of guile, and treated as such by those who do not understand.

What would have happened, I wonder, had Heckwelder and the gentle Zeisberger been allowed to continue their work? Would their doctrine have spread to other tribes through that region? Would the border warfare of years have been prevented? Would the red men have turned from the bloody foray to the ways of industry and peace? I do not know, and the world can not know now, ever. Yet one wonders, and—regrets.

Sheshequins, Nashoba and I were of Captain Pipe's party, which, together with the Wyandots, made nearly two hundred warriors in the band which arrived at Salem on the evening of August 10, 1781.

I can recall the scene yet—the peaceful settlement under the rays of the westering sun—the smoke from the dwellings curling above the roofs of the low log houses—the orderly gardens—the well-tilled fields—the cattle grazing along the banks of the river, as we came down upon it. It affected me oddly. I think now that something like regret at our purpose toward it took hold upon me. I know the thought came to me that it was so soon to be given over to desertion. And I said as much to Nashoba, who marched at my side with naught but the breech-clout to break the perfect symmetry of his slender form.

And I remember that he sniffed.

"Well enough for you to speak in such fashion, White Wolf. But such places as this weaken the sinews in a red man's legs and make soft clay of his arms."

His words rather piqued me at the time and I flung back the assertion that I was as much a red man as himself save by birth, and could beat his legs at the running, as indeed I could.

But he gave me a slow smile.

"Yet are you white at heart, my brother," he replied. "Bend above a stream when you forget it and look at your hair."

His words stabbed me in a dull way.

"Am I not then thy brother?" I exclaimed.

He gave me a long glance.

"Aye! You are my brother truly. Yet we think different thoughts," he said.

We came near the town, built cooking fires and roasted game. Men of the town came out to learn our mission. Pipe, Pomoacan and Elliott went back with them, taking Sheshequins and one or two other of our captains along.

Later the townsmen, in their usual friendly fashion, brought us out cakes made from pounded corn, and milk in earthen jugs and gourds. Our party being from friendly tribes, there was a complete intermingling and much conversation. We learned that the governing body of the town, the so-called National Assistants, composed of Indian converts, with Heckwelder as their leader, had met with our chiefs in the Long House, and that some sort of preliminary council was taking place even then.

That was hearsay of course, and I once more drew Nashoba into speech about it—

"Think you they will yield without trouble, Gray Wolf?"

He shrugged.

"They have toiled long to build up this place."

Nashoba frowned.

"Have we not in our lives, you and I, removed ourselves twice and built each time a new town? What is a house but a place to live in, until a better offers? If they have sense and listen to the word that they have no longer space here in which to spread their blankets, they will do as they are told and all will be well. Moreover, they believe not in fighting. Hence what trouble can they make?"

His was the Indian view, I had to admit. In fact I was rather surprised at my own feelings in the matter. I sat and stared into the fire and caught myself wondering if Nashoba were right and it was my white blood made me feel this vague regret which

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now filled my breast, yet had not filled it until the town itself in all its happy plenty had been spread out before my eyes.

Pipe and Pomoacan and Sheshequins came back before I came to any conclusion.

Sheshequins confirmed the words of the villagers who had brought us food. They had met with the National Assistants and Heckwelder himself, stated their mission and arranged for a council to begin at Gnadenhütten, an older settlement, and the seat of Zeisberger, the founder of the missions. The council would take place the next day, and we would move to Gnadenhütten, six miles up the river, in the morning, and camp until the matter was settled. Elliott had remained in the town as Heckwelder's guest for the night.

LATER, Heckwelder, after I had come to know him, told me of that time—how, seeing the work of years threatened with destruction at a blow, he talked with, argued with the English captain far into the night, seeking to dissuade him from compelling the removal which was planned. One may sympathize with the man who had devoted his life to the conversion of the men with whom he lived, who had preached to them the doctrine of peace and non-resistance; when he was faced now with an example of that stern force of physical power he had decried.

One may imagine what he suffered as he looked about the peaceful colony he had seen spring up, and grow and flourish under his care and teaching, and beheld it mentally, disrupted, given over to the wilderness again, a deserted and forgotten thing, the people he had fathered there wanderers in strange places, scattered, disbanded, slipping back to savagery perhaps, because they had dared to stand in the way of two opposing forces, which stood in turn for everything save those things he had taught.

In the end, Heckwelder told me, Elliott declared, with an oath, that his orders were explicit; that he was to see them removed and see them removed he would; that he was sleepy and did not care to talk any more, and that there would be plenty of time for discussion on the morrow, since the Indians were fond of hearing the sounds of their voices in public speech. He asked Heckwelder for whisky, and learning that he had none, laughed, cursed again and demanded to be shown a bed.

It was the next day that I saw Heckwelder himself. We were on the trail early, moving up the river to the town above. And since our mission was ostensibly friendly, we went into the town so soon as we had selected the site for our camp. We gathered in groups and stood about waiting for the council to open. We found the town expecting our arrival too, as a runner had been dispatched from Salem the night before.

Gnadenhütten was a far older town than Salem and there were among the converts a good many old men. One such it was who approached Nashoba and me, where we stood, and questioned if it were really our purpose to take them away from their homes.

Nashoba answered him quickly.

"If your eyes are too blind to see your danger, my father, it is for us to lead you forth to some safe place."

"New trails are for the young," said the old man in a quaver. "My joints are stiff and a journey will tax them sorely. Why should we be in danger, my son, we who have done harm to no one?"

"Ask thy teachers," Nashoba said with the unthinking arrogance of youth.

The ancient gave him a long searching glance. He nodded slowly.

"So did they treat even Him who was nailed to the cross," he faltered. "He did no harm, yet was He misunderstood and slain. But it is hard—hard."

He turned and stalked slowly toward the bulk of the Long House.

Nashoba glanced at me.

"What song is he singing?" he inquired.

"Some of their teacher's stories, most likely," I told him, little knowing then how soon I, too, should hear the tale, and find it gripping me deep in my soul.

The council gathered, Heckwelder and Zeisberger, both of them men of striking appearance, serious of face and bearing as the occasion warranted; their National Assistants, Pipe, Pomoacan, Sheshequins and other sub-chiefs both of the Wyandots and the Delawares, and Elliott. We stood and watched as they filed into the Long House.

The latter had brought along a tent. Now as he passed, he paused and glanced to where Nashoba and I were standing. He beckoned me to him and I advanced.

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"White Wolf, do you and your brother put up my tent while I am in council," he commanded. "Cut also a pole and place it before the tent and fix thereto the flag of the father at Detroit which you will find with the tent."

Without waiting for a reply from our surprise-stiffened lips he turned and followed the others into the house.

Judging by all which followed and the change which occurred from then on in the man, the manner in which he abandoned the suave bearing which had characterized him up until then, I imagine Elliott thought he had everything fully in hand at the time. I think he considered his mission as good as accomplished. Certainly I can scarcely find any other explanation for the attitude he adopted that first day in the council and maintained to the end. The task he had assigned us was a sample of all else. It was hardly one to be given to a sub-chief's sons. I have always suspected it was because he knew I was really white, that he chose me to pitch his tent.

Nashoba gazed after his disappearing back with a scowl.

"Does our cousin regard us as slaves?" he remarked none too sweetly, turning to me.

"Or women perhaps, seeing we are Delawares," I rejoined with a scowl.

Nashoba shrugged.

"He pushes his authority too far. Agent of the father at Detroit he may be, but I set up no lodges for him."

"What then?" I looked into his angry eyes.

He showed his teeth, strong, even, white between his lips.

"There be real women among the Delawares, my brother. These people are Delawares and Mohicans as you know. Doubtless their women know how to do their work. Let us see to it at once."

"In what fashion?" I queried, not catching his meaning at once.

He smiled thinly.

"We will find some one and tell him we have been directed to see that the white captain's lodge is raised. We will represent that we are seeking some one to do it. So shall it be done. You will see. Come."

I smiled in turn, and followed Nashoba who without the least hesitation approached an Indian standing not far off and proferred his request. He made it all seem very much as he had said, one had to admit. First he asked the fellow if he had noted Elliott speak to us, and on being assured in the affirmative, he transposed the Englishman's words in the fashion he had suggested to me.

Hospitality was one of the tenets of the Moravian creed. And although the pitching of a forced guest's tent was rather stretching the thing, the man Nashoba addressed promised to attend to the matter so soon as it might be done. We gave him implicit directions as to the lodge and pole, and very well satisfied with our own strategy, strolled on about the town, having gained a compliance with Elliott's order without using our own hands at the task, thereby avoiding any friction with the man himself and still preserving ourselves from the gibes of our fellows, had they seen us doing such woman's work.

So at last, walking between the garden-surrounded houses, we came to a larger structure, from which a sound of singing floated to our ears. More than that, the singing was in the voices of very young persons, so far as we could judge.

In so simple a fashion I approached the moment when the entire course of my life was to change, with no slightest warning of the fact. Both Nashoba and I paused and stood until the song ended. Then we looked at each other and as by common consent, entered the yard about the structure, and approached its open door.

Never shall I forget that sight—my first of anything even remotely resembling the white man's school. I can see it now in my soul, as I saw it then, in my first conscious moments as a man. Until then I had been at heart a boy. Life had not whispered her bigger secrets to my heart. And a moment later, all was changed, and I had listened to her activating call.

The room into which I gazed was perhaps thirty feet long by twenty wide, with several windows down each side, and a series of roughly hewn plank benches supported on short pole-legs set crosswise of the length. On the benches were possibly thirty children, all seated with their faces toward the front, where on a sort of platform a woman was seated facing them.

MY EYES took it all in briefly and fastened on the woman to remain. She was young. I didn't believe her over eighteen at the time. She was clad in the Indian mode, with

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leggings, moccasins, a short skirt of skin, embroidered in a plain bead design, and a long-sleeved, high-necked shirt of doeskin as cover for her upper body and arms.

But—my breath caught in my throat at the evidence of my staring. Her skin, though tanned, was even lighter than my own, and her hair, though heavy, was a wonderful reddish brown, soft and fine as the silk in the pod of a cottonweed in seeming, rather than coarse and black like that of the women I had until then known.

I forgot Nashoba. I forgot the schoolroom and the children. I forgot time and place and everything, save only the face toward which I looked. There was nothing else, only just that fair soft oval of waking life. I stood there drinking in its every tint and line.

And then she glanced up and saw us standing there at the door, and she started to smile and checked herself and remained seemingly as much surprised at what she saw as had I been, but a moment before. Our eyes met and held for an instant, which seemed long. Man and woman, we stood gazing on one another, while I felt my eyes film, and grew conscious of the dull beating of my heart beneath my ribs.

And then she seemed by an effort to rally. Her voice came far softer, far more liquid than that of any woman I had ever heard.

"Ye are of the party camped without the town, my brothers?"

"Aye, my sister," said Nashoba, who seemed in no ways perturbed.

"Ye are both from that party?"

"Aye," I told her, sensing perfectly what she meant by her form of question, and that she had been surprised by my yellow hair. "We heard the singing and were curious to know more of this place."

"It is the town school," she said, her smile coming now to sit upon her lips. "It is here we teach the children to read, and to count, and such other things as it is fitting they should learn. Will you come inside and listen to another song?"

We could scarcely refuse. We sidled through the door, Nashoba and I more or less embarrassed, and crouched on some empty benches at the rear, while the children sang something or other, I don't remember what, because all the time I was watching the first woman who had ever made me know I was a man, marking the whiteness of her skin, the deep color of her lips, the softness of her hair.

The song ended, we thanked our hostess and made our escape. In fact, it was an escape for me. My breast felt full to bursting, and I wanted to take a far deeper breath than I could. I had never felt like that before and was glad to get into the outside air.

Nashoba was far wiser than I at the time, because as we left the schoolhouse yard, he laid a hand on my naked arm.

"At last you have looked on a woman, my brother," he said.

I gave him a glance but no reply.

"A woman of the white blood—of these praying Indians," he went on as one musing on some thought.

"She wears the Delaware dress," I rejoined in a tone of almost resentment, feeling my face grow hot.

"As dost thou," he said slowly and fell silent until we had reached our camp, whither we turned as by mutual purpose.

There Elliott's tent was already up and several squaws were raising a pole on which should be placed the flag, and stepping it into a hole dug in the ground. Nashoba and I watched until the latter task was completed. Then I took the flag, climbed up and fixed it firmly near the top.

"I am for fishing," Nashoba said as I slid down.

We went to where he had left his robe, rolled up at the foot of a tree. He found hooks and line, which he always carried, and we went down to the stream. We dropped our baited lures into the water and waited in silence the result. But I found my interest wandering from a sport I had always loved. My thoughts went straying back to the log house where the girl I had seen was teaching the children to count and read and sing. I raised once more her picture in my brain. Who was she? Was she a white like myself? Surely, yes. But was she one of the missionaries' women? Probably that.

"You have a bite, dreamer," Nashoba's voice brought me back.

I drew in my line, unhooked a good-sized fish and threw it flopping on the grass.

"There lies thy heart, oh little brother."

Nashoba gestured toward the fish. A twinkle of amusement lay in his eyes as he turned them back to me.

I felt my face once more grow hot. I

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reeled up my line and stood on my feet. Nashoba watched me, his face gone sober. He was my brother. We had grown up together, and I knew he loved me as he had said. But I knew also that he did not know how deeply I was hit, how sorely I was wounded with the sweetest of all wounds. And I was in no mood then to tell him. He had called me a dreamer. Well—all I wanted to do just then was to get off by myself and continue to—dream.

I turned away and walked slowly into the heart of the woodland, found me a shaded spot where the heat of the August sun was broken and stretched out. Hours passed and I had dreamed them through. The sun was creeping down the west before I rose. But I rose knowing now why I had never felt the call of the daughters of my adopted tribe, why at my age, I was still unmarried. I had been waiting for this day, for that moment at the schoolhouse door—for a glance from a pair of liquid eyes which had reached to my man's soul and made it quiver, the smile of a pair of red lips in a face that was whiter than my own.

And then I frowned. Had I been waiting? What chance was there that a woman like that would be unmated in a land where marriage came early. Well, I would find out before we left this place. I would learn it. I would go back now and learn it.

I quickened my step. I neared the camp. I came up behind a small thicket of laurel, and I paused. I was on the side of the laurel away from the camp as yet, but I was no longer alone. Because kneeling, holding back the stems of the bushes, peering toward our camp, was the woman of my thoughts, beautiful, graceful and slender, as a timid, hiding doe.

CHAPTER IV

SHE had not heard me, though there was nothing strange about that. The art of walking without sound was no art, but nature with me—the result of lifelong training in my tribe. I came to a halt and stood watching the girl's graceful figure and the soft oval of her partly turned face.

Whether she was thus watching the camp for some definite object, or merely because of a curious whimsy, I had no way of knowing, nor was I vainglorious enough at the time to dream that she might have been led to her spying on the chance of catching another glimpse of the yellow-haired "Indian" who had visited her school that morning. I knew little of women, or their mental nature then. I had never studied the sex, and not once did I suspect any personal bearing in her act.

So after a time I put out a hand and broke the dry shaft of a dead stem on a bush with a sharply cracking sound.

She started like a terror-stricken fawn and whirled about, gaining her feet in a single, swift, upward spring. She turned toward the sound I had made, and her eyes fell upon me where I stood regarding her with my arms folded upon my naked breast.

Across her cheek I noted the red blood steal in a conscious, tell-tale wave of color, called up I judged by a sudden anger in being discovered, crouched down there by the laurel.

"Thou," she said at last, and I noted that she breathed with a quickened heave of her breast.

Once more I felt to the full how wholly unlike she was to any woman I had ever known. But I gave no sign as I answered her simply—

"Aye."

She overcame her temporary confusion.

"You took me by surprise," she remarked. "I forgot this morning to ask you how you are called—Stillfoot, or Yellow Cat who walks softly, perhaps?"

There was almost a touch of disdain in her tone.

I felt inclined to smile. Now I set down that first sweep of blood in her cheeks as pique at my finding her, past any doubt. And I passed by what was so plainly her allusion to the color of my hair, as an attempt to hide her true feelings and nothing else.

"I am White Wolf, a son of Sheshequins, sub-chief of the Leni Lenape." I replied.

She frowned slightly.

"A Delaware with yellow hair?"

I shrugged.

"As well as the color of the new-shelled buckeye on the head of a woman of the praying Indians," I said, with a certain boldness creeping into my heart and shaping my reply; "or the hue of the crushed pulp of a cherry on her mouth."

Once more the blood flowed across her

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face. But though her dark eyes flashed and her red lips curled, it came to me she was not wholly displeased.

"You speak as a singing bird, White Wolf," she responded quickly. "There is more white about you than your name?"

"And," said I going closer until I stood quite before her; "no Delaware mother painted your skin, my sister. They use a darker stain."

She looked away.

"I am of the Mohicans," she declared.

"As I am of the Delawares," I replied.

The Moravians' first converts had been among the Mohicans and I knew many of them had come to settle here with the teachers when first the Delawares had offered them a home."

"How called?"

"Macksithannes."

"The stream of the bear's path," I smiled. "That, white maid, is where you were found, it would appear."

Unexpectedly I found my heart leaping against my ribs. Here was another of the "lost children"—one like myself, save that she was a glorious woman. Like myself she was an adopted member of the tribe.

"So I have been told."

I am not denying that I found the situation pleasant. The forest was pleasant with its sweet pungent breath, and the presence of this girl of the red-brown hair was like nothing I had ever known. I set about a deliberate prolonging of the conversation.

"And you have lived with these 'praying Indians' ever since, Little Stream, and seen little of fighting men. Was that why you crept down to look upon our camp?"

Once more she flushed, with what seemed anger to me then.

"Nay—the Moravians have seen more than one party of war, other than the band to which you belong, White Wolf—we have even been threatened with removal ere this."

"It is an order of the father at Detroit," I said, not liking her tone too well.

"And the Delawares are the father's servants?"

Again her brown eyes flashed.

The thing was almost an insult. No Indian liked to be called a servant. I folded my arms again, having let them down, and I put up my head so that I stood well above her.

"A father may command his children as well as his slaves," I made retort so quickly thay she must have seen my offense.

And suddenly her mood underwent a change.

"The father does not understand!" she cried out. "If some one would tell him—speak good words to his ear, not those which like an arrow are but feathered to a certain aim. If he were but made to know that all we ask is peace—that our paths are open to all men, that to us all men are brothers—then might he understand and leave us in that peace we ask. But the singing birds flutter about him, and there is none—no one, to speak true words in his ear!"

She broke off and abruptly I saw her red lips quiver, and her breast begin to rise and fall swiftly as she seemed to pant for breath. Her change affected me strangely. I forgot my resentment of her former words.

"Little Stream" I said softly. "Little Stream, what mean your words?"

"That we are a people misunderstood, misjudged, spoken falsely about among the nations!" she cried out again and clenched her hands. "It is cruel, man of the Delawares—it is wrongful—not just! These are my people and I love them. Their suffering is mine. Are they to be nailed to a cross by those who do not understand, like the Man of Galilee?"

And now she had spoken as an Indian might speak who sorrowed for some sorrow of his tribe. This I could understand. And for the second time this day I had heard mention of a man nailed to a cross in her words. It excited my imagination.

"Who was that Man?" I exclaimed.

She sobered at my words.

"He was the Son of God, who came to teach and save the world," she said softly. "But—the world would not understand and they slew Him, who meant them only good."

In a way that was like the legend of the Ojibways, that the Spirit Mondamin had given his life that the nations might be fed, but that he still lived on in the fields of corn. The thought came to me and I said as much to the maiden.

"You should hear the teachers explain it. Will you come to the meeting this evening?" she replied.

Frankly, I wanted to hear the story.

"Do you invite me?" I said.

"Aye. We are taught to pray for our enemies and show them only kindness."

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Again I drew myself up. This girl had a way of flicking me with her words.

"Am I an enemy, Macksithannes?" I demanded.

"You are of their party," she said almost shortly and turned away. "I must return to the town."

Then she was gone, moving with a free-limbed grace down the forest aisles, while I stood and watched her go, vaguely stirred in my being as I had never been stirred before. And suddenly I found the muscles in my folded arms aquiver. Strange thoughts seemed waking in my brain. She had spoken of her people, as I had spoken of mine. But—she was of my people—our blood was the same. Not all the years of training could blot out the fact.

Her soft cheek through which the red blood showed was the cheek of a white. And I was a white. The girl I had found here today and I were of a common strain of blood. And seeing her, my blood had called to her blood, making her like no other woman to me. Yet despite that she had as good as called me an enemy just before she walked away. I smiled rather grimly as I turned to resume my interrupted course to the camp, where I found Nashoba calmly eating my fish, which he had broiled over some coals.

HE GLANCED up, recognized my coming and tossed me half of the fish. I took it and began picking the flesh from the bones with my fingers.

"What is the talk?" I inquired.

Nashoba shrugged.

"There is much talk in truth," he replied. "Before the blast of speech from the lips of these people's teachers, Pomoacan would seem to have grown no more than a reed which is rocked by a breeze. Report has it that the father's agent whose tent is over yonder beneath the father's flag, is angry in his heart. The talk is that there will be trouble over this."

"Trouble?" I looked up and met his eyes.

He finished his fish and threw the bones into the bushes with a gesture of disgust.

"The white man, be he Long Knife or Red Coat, speaks always with a double tongue, my brother. They are singing birds. This mission on which we have come is aimed not for the good of these people, but for their scattering as the leaves in the time of frost. Elliott, our cousin, has thrown off the disguise of fair words. He demands that the teachers be banished nor allowed to go with their people when they are removed. Glickhican who came from Salem today opposes this in no uncertain speech. Pomoacan likewise resists."

So that was what Elliott planned for us to do. The words of the maid I had met in the forest came back to my mind.

"And Pipe?" I asked.

Nashoba shrugged.

"Our captain is minded on this removal as he has been for years."

"He is with our cousin then?"

"Aye—as yet. But—ere he is done he will be as a dog which eats grass to purge his stomach of something unclean."

I looked into his face in some surprise. These were strange words from one who up till now had been as bitter as any in our clan against the Moravian towns.

He seemed to understand my thoughts too, for once more he twitched his copper shoulders.

"While you dreamed of woman in the forest, I stood outside a window of their Long House and hearkened to the words of the council, White Wolf. And what tribe will give up its leaders at the word of another, be he white father or the sachem of another people? If these praying Indians are to be removed, let it be done as a people, not as dry leaves before a wind, as our cousin would appear to desire."

History will record Nashoba right. All that was criminal or brutal seemed to come up in the soul of Elliott in those days. From the first meeting of the council he sought to drive matters to the accomplishment of his own personal wishes for revenge against the innocent objects of his hatred and spite. That he earned the disgust of the red men for himself, history will also show. His sole safety at that time lay in the fact that he was regarded as the agent of the British king.

But I made no answer to Nashoba just then. My brain was busy. If the missionaries were to be banished what would become of the maid I had met today? Would she go with the teachers, since she was white? And if so, where? I clenched my hands and flexed my arms. They at least would be somewhere near her to keep her from harm.

Aye, already I was minded to forsake all the ties of a lifetime and follow instead the

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slender brown-haired maid whom as yet I had seen but twice. Wherever she went, there I vowed to myself I would go also. I caught myself up—I had met her—talked to her it was true yet I knew nothing of her. My doubts of the afternoon came back.

A bell began tolling across the twilight, while I sat. It was the one in the tower on the Moravian church house in the town. Its measured note struck across the quiet sylvan scene and blended with its atmosphere of peace. Never do I think the Christian settlements along the Tuscarawas appeared more peacefully calm than on that evening in August so short a time before they were given over to pillage and desecration, with the cabins, the cultivated fields, the herds along the river, the twilight and the slow tongue of the bell calling those who believed in something higher and better than themselves to the place where they might open their hearts to its influence upon their lives.

Nashoba rose as the bell tolled on.

"We are invited to their meeting, my brother," he said. "Let us go."

I nodded and stood up smiling. Invited we might be, I thought, yet I had an individual invitation from the lips of the maid whom perhaps I would see, if even briefly again. Nashoba and I set off.

Many more were moving toward the town. It was the etiquette of the red man not to slight an accepted invitation. By twos and threes we left the camp and entered the town where already the inhabitants were streaming toward the church.

It was a homely place judged by the standards of the whites; no more than a large hall with benches on either side of a central aisle, and a slightly raised platform at the far end, where Zeisberger and Heckwelder, the two teachers, sat.

Below them were grouped their Indian lieutenants, the National Assistants, and back of them were gathered nearly every man, woman and child in the town. That was to be expected on a night when so much interest was toward in their lives. But as a matter of fact, daily attendance at church was a compulsory duty on all not ill or in attendance upon the sick or absent from the town.

And here let me explain something perhaps not made clear before. In all the congregation the two teachers on the raised platform were the only local whites. It was Zeisberger first and Heckwelder after him who had carried their faith to the red man's heart. Outside of them the Moravians were Indian converts to their teaching, Mohicans from the Beaver in Pennsylvania and Delawares—members of our own tribe.

We sat down and I glanced about. I picked Glickhican, tall, straight as a new sapling for all his age, from among the National Assistants sitting with folded arms and proud, inscrutable face. I remembered the story of his conversion; how he had come to a meeting such as this to confound the teacher with his arguments for war, and having entered the house had been impressed in the most peculiar manner with the belief that he had witnessed the entire scene before, even to Zeisberger's face.

As a result, he, the greatest warrior of our tribe had remained as a convert in that place where he came to scoff. I glanced about at the other faces. What was it, I asked myself, which could change all these people from their former ways and bring them together here. I little knew how soon I was destined to understand in part at least.

But abruptly now I gave over my speculation, as a face leaped out of all the rest before my eyes—a face softly smiling—the face of the woman I loved. Yes, I acknowledged to myself that I loved her. It was the Indian way—to see, and to desire, and I was an Indian in all the training of my life. And having seen this woman today, I knew tonight that I wanted her for mine. So I sat watching, and after a time, she seemed to feel my glance as one will and turned her head and looked full into my eyes.

TO BE CONTINUED

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The Boss of Lonesome Lake

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

BY

ARTHUR JAMES HAYES

Author of "The Blue Wolf," "The Smiler," etc.

THE moon lifted over the silhouetted spruce-tops pale as a polished dollar. Against the metallic brightness of the night sky the wavering red and green pennons of the aurora faded into a discouraged arc of sickly yellow. The forest walls that had bulked so blackly in the uncertain rays of the Northern Lights, were transformed into a great frieze of purple shadows and gleaming frost patterns. Where the old tote-road turns abruptly eastward and slopes down toward the shore of Lonesome Lake, the solitary traveler paused momentarily.

The mere crunching of frozen snow beneath his feet had taken on a companionable sound during the twelve-mile trek and as he stopped the ensuing silence seemed almost startling. His glance roved over the glittering glare-ice of the island-studded lake, then rested upon the cluster of camps in the clearing. Against the background of blue-green snow crystals they seemed like a handful of dominoes cast haphazard on the ground. In the cook-camp and bunk-houses the windows gleamed as yellow squares against the log walls.

Save for the lake and the clearing, the whole panorama at his feet was one of dusky unending pine wilderness. He shuddered slightly from the cold and thrust his hands deeper into his mackinaw pocket. As he started down the hill his frame was shaken with convulsive coughing. Five minutes later he was knocking at the door of the company office. A voice within curtly bade him enter. After the restful dimness of the wilderness night he found himself blinking against the rays of an oil lamp, caught and disseminated by a polished tin reflector.

"Where from?" queried the unseen dignitary.

"Wolf Junction," responded the newcomer. "I hoofed it over from there."

Back in the shadow Glen McKay, Manager of the Lonesome Lake Lumber Co., scrutinized the recent arrival keenly. In the direct rays of the lamp the young man's countenance held a leaden pallor and there were sallow circles under the eyes. His attire was too new and complete to carry conviction. He wore a red and white mackinaw belted, a brown squirrel-skin hat, corduroy trousers and high shoepacks. His hands were gloved in heavy fringed gauntlets, fur-lined and embroidered Indian fashion, with multi-colored beads.

"Job?" queried McKay." Or—just curiosity?"

The young man drew off his gauntlets slowly.

"A job," he said succinctly. "It would require a lot more curiosity than I possess to prompt me to walk twelve miles. These tote-roads aren't exactly boulevards."

"No," asserted McKay. "I don't suppose it's necessary to point out that they're not intended to be. After we've gotten out the sticks perhaps we'll stage an Easter parade

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or something. You might furnish the sartorial thrills. In the mean time I suppose you'll be wanting to eat something?"

The other smiled faintly at the witticism and nodded.

"Guess I wouldn't have much trouble stowing away about three regular meals right now," he said. "There aren't any restaurant facilities at the junction."

"Go over to the cook-camp and sit in," said McKay. "There's no ceremony about it. As long as there's a light in the shack the short-order service is on."

After the office door had closed behind the belted mackinaw the boss stared at a gaudy lithograph on the farther wall.

"Clendenning, eh!" he said softly, aloud, after the practise of man much alone. "And on his uppers!"

He groped in his trousers pocket and extricated a tin of tobacco. From the drawer of the white-pine desk he extracted a brown meerschaum pipe. Packing its bowl with cube-cut he lighted it and watched the smoke plumes gyrate ceilingward.

In the dimly lit cook-camp, with its long parallel rows of bare tables, the newcomer was eating. Homer Craig, camp cook, had set a second plate of beans and bacon before him. Beside his plate, almost level with his chin, stood the extra-trick coffee pot, that sterling first-aid to belated arrivals in camp. The big tin cup had been replenished three times. Frost and silence and miles of crunching snow make for prodigious appetites.

McKay entered and sauntered down the length of the dining-room. He seated himself beside the solitary occupant. Out in the kitchen a tremendous clattering of knives and forks bore witness that the usual sack-drying method for camp cutlery, was again in opertion. The manager of the Lonesome Lake outfit leaned over and lowered his voice discreetly.

"Beats the grub at Leaveworth all hollow, eh?" he said softly.

The young man glanced up sharply. The eyes of the two met in a quick duel of cross-purposes. McKay thought that the sallow countenance, even in the deceptive lamp light, had become appreciably paler.

"Why Leaveworth?" queried the other sharply. But he didn't raise his voice above the standard of caution set by his inquisitor.

Glen McKay smiled. Engaging wrinkles crept in around his keen, pale-gray eyes. He spun a tin cup deftly and watched it twirl noiselessly.

"I suppose I might have said the Biltmore, instead," he remarked casually. "Only—I didn't."

He shot a sharp glance at his *vis-à-vis*. The other's eyes were fixed upon his plate.

"Well?" he queried dully.

"I don't stick around Chicago much," resumed McKay irrelevantly. "When I do time hangs rather heavily on my hands. A couple of years ago I just sort of drifted into one of the courtrooms in the Federal Building. Was looking up an old chum who'd grabbed off a soft berth as inspector. Anyhow it seems as though they had a young chap dead to rights on some postal violations. He'd peddled a lot of 'blue sky' mining stock to confiding widows and poor washer-women and the like. Seems as though he had the bad taste to use a lot of first-class postage in doing it.

"The judge said seven years sort of casual-like. I remember the expression on that young fellow's face—kind of dazed and sick and bewildered. Guess he hadn't realized what he was up against. Well, I suppose a man loses his pink cheeks and jaunty bearing after a few months or years in 'stir'. I'll swear when you drifted in I hardly recognized you. If only I hadn't seen——"

His voice trailed off into silence.

The man in the belted mackinaw reached over and gripped his arm tensely.

"If—if you hadn't seen what?" he insisted.

"If I hadn't seen a press dispatch in a Duluth paper to the effect that Edgar Clendenning, confidence sharp extraordinary, had made good his escape. Seems he clipped a guard on the way out. His companion in the getaway—'Fresno Phil' McGee, I believe it said—was croaked by a 'dick' in the Witchita railroad yards. Clendenning came clean. And then," he grinned broadly, "just when I'm wondering if you can believe anything you see in print these days, here comes the proof drifting into my own office, all gladded up with fur caps and beaded gloves and what-not."

"I didn't see that particular story," said the younger man evenly. "I've sort of gotten out of the newspaper habit these last few weeks. I—I suppose there's a

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reward out—particularly since the guard's skull is fractured."

"For a man who doesn't depend on the daily papers," chuckled McKay, "you sure have authentic sources of information. The guard's still lingering around in the hospital with his head the general shape and consistency of a bean-bag. And the Government yearns two thousand dollars worth to see your—er, that is, Clendenning's—handsome face again."

The correction was made no less studiously than the slip. A transient gleam of satisfaction flamed in the boss's keen eyes as he noted the dejected slump of the other's shoulders.

"I suppose you've got that two-thousand-dollar reward about half-spent, haven't you?" asked the stranger listlessly.

"No," said McKay very deliberately. "We've all of us got some pet aversion or other. Mine's blood money. I wouldn't care if it was a million. It isn't my game. If you're willing to swing an ax for forty per and found, the incident is closed."

He slid his big fist across the table and the other gripped it until his knuckles shone in white relief through the skin.

"You bet I'm willing to swing an ax," he said briefly, "on those conditions."

McKay rose without further comment and strode across the creaking floor. At the door he paused.

"I don't believe I remember your name," he said. "I want to enter it on the time book."

"Emerson," said the one addressed. He hesitated for a fraction of a second. "Jack Emerson."

"All right, Mr. Emerson," said McKay. "I'll have Larson show you around in the morning. In the meantime I'll have him hunt you up a bunk."

After he was gone the stranger remained seated for a long time, staring at the bare planks of the crude table. Then slowly, without lifting his eyes, he groped in his inside coat pocket and extricated two or three papers. The cookee, a tallow-haired young Finn, began to put out the remaining lamps. Roused from a profound reverie "Emerson" rose to his feet and started for the door. He paused uncertainly and returned to his plate.

When he had reached the door again he was halted by the voice of the cook.

"Here stranger," he called sharply, "you kin come a-running fer this dollar. You ain't in a big town beanery here. Tips don't go."

He tossed it contemptuously toward the door and the young man, very red of face, caught it deftly.

"I'm sorry," he said, "that I violated local precedent. Also I'm much obliged for the meal."

After he had gone the dour visage of the old cook relaxed slightly.

"His heart's all right anyhow," he volunteered aloud.

"Ay bet Ay e'nt givin' back no dollar," asserted the cookee stoutly.

Out in the clearing the newcomer stared around him. Lights were out everywhere save in the company office and the farther bunk-house. He drew in a deep breath of crisp pine-scented air and then struck a match on the beaded back of his gauntlet. He applied the tiny flame to the papers, watching them burst into a blaze. He held them until the heat was intolerable, then dropped them into the snow. After they had burned to a blackened ash he ground the charred fragments with his heel and strode away across the chip-littered clearing.

IT WAS still dark when the crew was routed out the next morning. Larson's great bellow: "All out boys. It's daylight in the swamp," met an immediate response. Blankets erupted everywhere and sleepy tousled heads emerged. Stockinged feet thudded upon the bare floor and the babel of jests and curses that is the bunk-house during waking hours, broke forth. Emerson, aching in every limb from his long hike, emerged with them.

He hadn't slept well. The strangeness and stuffiness of the big structure, the continuous snores and the eery wailing of the wind in the pines had not conduced to slumber. He took his turn at the wash-trough, dousing his head beneath the icy water and tingling with the sharp reaction of the startled blood. Outside the stars till gleamed feebly but in the east, over Lost Squaw Ridge, the dawn flamed palely.

He followed the crew as they sped merrily across the clearing to the cook-camp. Then seating himself in an unoccupied place near the door, probably shunned for its draft, he watched the nondescript assemblage eat. On his left was a squat

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swarthy Pole, next to him was a great blond giant of a Scandinavian and across the table, peering at him rather curiously, was a stocky Finn, with the strange obliqueness of eye that has made Finnish ethnology such a moot question.

Elsewhere were French-Canadians, loquacious Irishmen and swarthy half-breeds, together with a few Americans whose poise and bearing, like his own, suggested that there were reasons other than mere love of the wilderness prompting their presence at Lonesome Lake. He surveyed them all critically, wondering who among the number he might find a friend or foe. They had paid no attention to him. And at the table, after the unwritten law of the North, they ate silently.

After the usual meal of boiled beef, potatoes, flapjacks, doughnuts, pie and coffee, the crew dispersed to their varied activities. The teamsters went forth with lanterns and boisterous profanity to harness their horses. The skidders attended to a similar duty while the sawyers and swampers departed for the various spots where they had cached favorite saws or axes.

Larson instructed the newcomer briefly.

"You bane road-monkey," he said, proffering him a poleax. "It e'nt bane hard yob neidder for greenhorn," he added. "One nodder faller know how. Yoost you watch heem leetle bit first tam."

Emerson nodded with a slight smile.

"I'll tie into it," he said. "If the other guy knows the ropes I'll try to hold my end up."

His companion, a taciturn Swede, allowed him to learn chiefly by emulation. It was not a task making exactions upon scientific lore or great intellect. He found that making straight the way for the logging sleighs was his only function. That required the grubbing out of obstructive roots, the hacking down of small trees and the occasional leveling of an earth mound or moss hummock. The exertion whipped a faint color to his cheeks and made his stiff muscles healthily weary again.

Pete Skjarsen, his companion in the work, instructed him in the swinging stroke that makes a poleax bite so miraculously through whole inches of frozen wood. At ten o'clock he shed his mackinaw, finding that the exertion and his blue-flannel shirt kept him sufficiently warm. All about him, their activities screened from view by the denseness of the trees, he could hear the clanking of trace chains, the curses of teamsters and skidding-crews and the long drawn warning cries of "Timber-r-r" as the white-pine forest monarchs went crashing to the earth.

The sun rose, a glorious red ball, flooding the forest aisles with crimson light and gilding the frosted branches of the trees until they gleamed irridescent as cut diamonds. Whisky-jays hopped curiously about, watching the activities of the road-monkey with beady bright eyes and the uncanny prescience that guides their flight to the scene of impending noonday lunches. Skjarsen fed them out of his hand at noon and Emerson followed suit. They were fully as tame as pigeons and the gruff sentiment of the lumberjacks protected them from molestation.

The chief obstacle of the afternoon's progress was a huge windfall directly in the course that McKay had marked out. A large tamarack had fallen, tearing up a vast area of moss and earth enmeshed in its tangled roots. The consequent hole left by the fallen giant had filled with swamp water and frozen into a small patch of gleaming glare-ice. After they had sawed it through a skidding-crew requisitioned from the next timber run had hauled the tree clear. With grubaxes and crowbars the road-monkeys demolished the barrier of roots. In preparation for the first trip of the 'tank', the six-horse road-icing apparatus, the new thoroughfare was covered with snow.

By this time the sun had set and the brief mid-Winter dusk enveloped the scene of their activities.

"Ay guess Ay skoll knock off," suggested Skjarsen. It was his first remark in three hours.

"A good hunch," responded Emerson.

He tossed his ax and crowbar into the brush. As he did so he caught a glimpse of tan through the interstices of trees.

"A deer by Jove," he exclaimed.

But it was not a deer. Around the bend in the road came a buckskin pony at full gallop. The rider was flicking it lightly with a quirt and the little bronco was hurling snow-clods in every direction as he sped down the hill. At the intersection of the iced road and the half-constructed branch, the animal shied at something and perversely bolted past the road-monkeys.

Emerson cried out with horror. The ice

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patch of the demolished windfall was concealed beneath the snow they had shoveled into the rough roadway. The buckskin struck it with feet bunched and pitched forward upon its knees. Its rider, a young girl in a fox-skin jacket and corduroy riding togs, stuck pluckily, and went down with the horse. The momentum carried them clear of the ice and into a tangle of willow bushes in the deep snow beyond.

Emerson had a brief glimpse of a crumpled little figure clutching desperately for the brute's bridle before its frenzied struggles fairly buried her in flying snow. He ran swiftly back down the slope and hurled himself upon the brute's head. Grasping its muzzle firmly he lifted the bronco's head skyward. Its attempts to regain its feet ceased almost automatically.

"Hey you," he called—in the excitement. he couldn't recall Skjarsen's name—"hey you! Free the girths will you?"

With surprising alacrity the big Swede freed the twin girths of the stock saddle and dragged the girl clear. She stood up unsteadily, her face pale and her startled eyes roving from one to the other. Freed of the encumbering saddle and again given its head, the little buckskin scrambled to its feet. Emerson stared anxiously at the girl.

"You're—you're not badly hurt, are you?" he asked.

She shook her head, smiling slightly.

"Nothing broken, I believe," she said, picking up the saddle. "I suppose I'm black and blue from head to foot, though. You seem to have left a lot of roots and things unnoticed."

"I guess it's not frictionless," admitted Emerson. "But of course you put it to a more exacting test than ordinary conditions call for."

He was making conversation to stare at the girl. She was exceedingly lithe and slender, with wind-whipped pink cheeks and big gray eyes. Her fox-skin jacket was white with snow and her dark hair gleamed with melted crystals. Whatever of natural pallor the accident might have caused, was already counteracted by the sting of the snow on her cheeks. She wiped it off with a ridiculously small and frilly handkerchief and resumed the task of resaddling her horse.

"I'll tighten the girths for you," volunteered the novice road-monkey eagerly.

She shook her head.

"I'm sure I don't need assistance," she said quietly.

She watched the bronco spread its legs and inflate its chest, after the practise of Western horses when the saddle girths tighten. At the exact moment when the beast respired sufficiently she drew the white strands snug. The horse accepted defeat stoically and casually nibbled the branches of a red willow bush.

She drew the off rein snugly over the animal's neck with practised hand. As the horse obediently swung to, she was up and in the saddle.

"I want to thank you both," she said, "for digging me out of that awful drift. I don't know whatever prompted Bobbie to bolt up here anyway. He's just full of freak notions. I've got to watch him every minute."

She swung the quirt lightly against the buckskin's flank and the nervous brute sprang forward again. His hoofs echoed briefly on the iced road and then horse and rider were swallowed up in the gloom. Emerson turned toward Skjarsen.

"Nice work, old man," he said tersely. "You sure got her out of that mess in record time."

Skjarsen was disposed to generous candor.

"Ay en't t'ink so queek lak you," he admitted. "Ay guess she skell bane kick to h'al off you en't yoomp on his head."

"That was the easiest part of it," responded the other carelessly. "Ever see her before?"

"Sure," said Skjarsen.

"Who is she?"

"Ay en't know that."

"Where does she live?"

"Over one place on Lost Squaw."

"Who with," persisted Emerson, his exasperation mounting as the cross-examination proceeded.

"With one fallar," responded Skjarson stolidly.

"Her husband?" asked Emerson.

"Ay en't knowing that," admitted Skjarsen.

And the two road-monkeys, neophyte and veteran, plodded on toward the Lonesome Lake headquarters camps.

McKay called to him as he came out of the cook-camp.

"How'd you hit it?" he asked.

"All right," responded Emerson tersely.

"Plug away," said the boss. "We'll move you up in a few days."

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And turning his broad back upon him, the manager of the Lonesome Lake outfit strode back to the office. Emerson surveyed his blistered hands with a rueful smile.

"If this thing builds muscle the way it ought to," he muttered, "I'm not so sure I want any promotion."

AFTER supper he found himself seated beside a little black-haired chap with deep blue eyes, and an unmistakably Celtic cast of countenance. The other grinned cheerfully.

"First day in the swamp?" he asked.

"Yes," said Emerson, eager to engage in conversation. "It's a little rough on stale muscle isn't it?"

"Rough as ——," asserted the other. He unlaced his boots slowly. "I'm muckin' around down near the Little Squaw," he explained, "and between water pockets and the chance of a shot in the back, it ain't any paradise either."

"What is the Lost Squaw?" asked Emerson.

He recalled the Swede's allusion to it, and the circumstances quickened his interest.

"A creek to the east of us," explained the other. "The Seven Pines people are deckin' in there and it seems there's an old-time feud over water rights and trespass claims between them and us. They seem to hate McKay like sin. Served notice that the first Lonesome Lake man over the creek would be creased for his pains. I often wonder if the crazy Frenchman wouldn't take a pot-shot at one of the boys on general principles."

"Are they a big concern," he asked.

"No," said the other. "And to me, that's the funny part of it. I'll bet that all told they haven't more than thirty men over there. And you could put their whole outfit in here without crowdin'. But they shoot a lot of timber north every year."

"North?"

"Sure. The Lost Squaw empties into the Rainy and the mills up there take their cut. That's why they deck in the creek. We stack our sticks in Lonesome Lake and hoist-load 'em from there for the Virginia City mills."

"Kind of armed-neutrality affair eh?" queried Emerson.

"You've said it," assented the other. "Guess the girl is the only go-between we've got. She sure is a pippin. Some o' the gang think the boss is plumb wild about her. And I guess Pierre Lereaux of the Seven Pines outfit is hit just as hard. She sure don't waste any time on the common herd."

"I think I've met up with her," said Emerson. And he narrated the incident of the windfall.

The little Irishman's eyes crackled with admiration for the girl's unshaken daring.

"She's a wonder," he declared. "Nervy as any man that breathes air. And that —— bronc' o' hers is as hard to ride as a rabbit, too. Her old man's a broken-down schoolteacher, or some such, I understand. Took up a claim for his health. He's got some good timber stumpage on it, too, if he isn't gyped out of it."

"How can they gyp him?" asked Emerson interestedly.

His companion shrugged his shoulders.

"Plenty ways," he declared. "Contests, faked lines, freeze-outs on transportation and all that. And the old boy's a little cracked on the subject himself. Wants ten dollars a thousand on the stump, which is by way of being a whole lot."

The black-haired Hibernian extracted a mouth-organ from his "turkey" and played a number of lilting Irish folk songs and jigs. Those within immediate hearing applauded. Thus encouraged he sang. Silence descended upon the lumberjacks. Music speaks a common tongue. Outside the frost cracked in the pines and the moon climbed higher in the steel-blue sky. Away to the south, in the great maze of Cedar Swamps, the Lost Squaw wolf-pack howled with noses upturned to the moon, and the sound, mellowed by distance, joined in the mélange of wilderness murmurs.

Before he snuggled under the blankets Emerson's bunkie put out his hand shyly.

"My name's Lonergan," he said. "I'm sure glad to meet you."

"Mine's Emerson," said the other.

He gripped the proffered hand warmly and into his sallow cheeks crept the faintest shadow of a flush.

The week passed with a swiftness that appalled him when he noticed the sudden shaving epidemic that seized the men on Saturday night.

"They jump the Hematite & Northern logging train after chuck," explained Lonergan. "Chisholm's wide open Sundays and the old man is lucky if fifty per cent. of

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'em are back on the job Monday. Want to come along?"

Emerson didn't. He was tired he said, and fed-up on towns. The Irishman shaved with care, donned new boots, a startling crimson shirt and a brighter mackinaw and joined the throng that packed the caboose of the H. & N. "Lumberjack Special."

SUNDAY morning Emerson borrowed a rifle from one of the cruisers and strolled back up on the ridge. His footsteps trended carelessly eastward until he paused on the banks of the Lost Squaw. Already the frozen surface was piled high, for half a mile or more, with logs. The process of decking had been simple. The Seven Pines teams apparently spilled their loads on top of the ridge and let them roll helter-skelter down the slope and out upon the frozen surface of the stream. Even to the pale-faced young novice who surveyed the tangle of white and Norway pine so wonderingly, it seemed a slovenly job.

He walked out on to the ice and stared at the ends of the sticks. Each was marked with a small "SP," apparently imprinted by a hard blow with a steel die. He was scrutinizing the impression with casual interest when he heard a sharp oath behind him. He turned apprehensively. A tall swarthy man was staring at him with hostile interest.

"Mebbeso," he sneered, "eet ees you lak to look ovaire our place, eh?"

Emerson didn't reply at once. His keen eyes roved over the other's great stature, frowning visage and thick-corded neck. He seemed to be something of a dandy in his own light. His coat was a magnificent affair of illicitly slaughtered beaver pelts, and around his neck was a bright-green silk handkerchief. His trousers were of blue serge and his feet were shod with heavily beaded mooseskin moccasins.

He was fine-looking withal, the thin features of some distant aristocracy refining the coarseness of his Indian blood. His menacing presence seemed to perturb the other. Emerson shifted his rifle forward into the crook of his arm. Then he smiled slightly.

"I was admiring your cut," he explained. "I haven't any designs on stealing anything. As for liking to look over your place—well, if it maintains the general circus atmosphere of its owner, it might be a capital idea, eh?"

The sarcasm was not lost upon the huge quarter-breed. He thrust forth his jaw and slapped his own chest dramatically.

"Me," he bellowed, "I don' be laugh at, nevaire. I don' de laugh at, now! I am Pierre Lereaux, Managaire, Seven Pine, an' eef mabbeso you lak to come look ovaire mon place, all right. Onlee you don' go back that way. You go back in thees pine box like frozen moose-meat, eh?"

The smaller man leaned negligently against the butt of an outthrust log.

"You're a hard guy on your own admission," he drawled, "and I am very much in awe of your promised performance. Just to prove it," he spoke abruptly through set teeth, "I'm going to give you one minute to get to —— out of here. And before you leave I want to tip you to the fact that I like to roam around pretty much as I please. I don't intend to trespass on Seven Pines land but the Lost Squaw is a navigable stream and Government property. I'll hang around it as much as I like. Now you just hike!"

The other's fists clenched but the single eye of the rifle stared ominously at him and turning abruptly he ascended the eastern slope of the stream. The other watched him out of sight in the scrub spruce and then swung back toward the camp. He arrived late for dinner and had the first opportunity for conversation with Craig during his solitary repast. The old cook stood in the kitchen doorway and seemed a little more disposed to friendliness. Emerson narrated the morning's incidents.

Craig frowned.

"You've started something, lad," he remarked sententiously. "If Lereaux doesn't own the Lost Squaw from mouth to headwaters he seems to have lost sight of the fact. I remember only two years ago he got his man. A fellow named Guest, a representative of the owners of the Lonesome Lake Company, came up here in the Fall. He had some kind of run-in with Lereaux over survey work for a possible dam. He used to canoe up and down the creek.

"One day he was missing and a week later they found his canoe way down on Rainy River. He was in the bottom of it, with the top of his head blown off by a soft-nosed bullet. The Rainy is forty miles north of here and it was hard to fix the guilt. After the usual useless investigation the whole

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affair was dropped. But on general principles I'd keep an eye peeled for this guy Lereaux."

The road-monkey passed the warning off lightly enough. But as he walked back toward the bunk-house his expression was exceedingly thoughtful. A rumpus with any one, no matter now victorious he might be, was the very last thing to be desired. As he passed the office he glanced through the window. McKay was within, bending over a great blue-print chart on the pine desk. He seemed to be making notations with a red pencil. On the spur of the moment Emerson knocked at the door.

He entered at the manager's bidding. McKay stared at him as he had done the first night of his arrival.

"Well?" he queried.

"I'd like to get a pointer on local practise," said the young man hesitantly. "I was rambling around a little this morning, and down on the creek to the east here I was warned off by a fellow who said he was boss of Seven Pines. I'm keen to observe camp tradition. What's the answer: fight or sheer off?"

McKay stared thoughtfully at the chart.

"I've seen blood spilled on three continents," he said slowly, "for a variety of causes. Most of 'em were not worth while. That's the way I dope the present situation. Our cut is all west of the creek. Our decking territory is Lonesome Lake. We could continue the feud with that Seven Pines outfit, and pot a few of them and have a few of our boys croaked in return. But it seems almighty useless to me. I've given orders to steer clear of the Lost Squaw."

"Very well, sir," said Emerson. "I guess I had the wrong cue this morning."

"Just a minute—er—Emerson," said the boss sharply as he reached the door.

The other turned. The boss was on his feet now and his gimlet gray eyes were boring into the swamper's countenance.

"You don't think for a holy second that I'm afraid of Lereaux do you?"

"No, sir," said the other colorlessly. "Just a matter of common-sense caution, I take it."

"Just that," replied McKay crisply. "If any one in these workings is disposed to question the statement, I'd be pleased to have you send him around."

Long after the door had creaked closed the boss of Lonesome Lake remained on his feet, staring over the kerosene lamp at the blackness of the window-pane.

IT WAS a particularly obdurate root. As thick as a man's waist it obtruded from the frozen soil, vibrating to the ax strokes until every blow was torture to the ax-wielder's hands. Emerson desisted from hacking at it and sought by sheer strength to lift it clear of the road. It resisted with maddening tenacity. Over his shoulder he heard a soft gurgle.

"It looks like a lost cause," said a merry voice behind him.

He turned, flushed and panting from his exertions. The girl sat the buckskin pony easily, despite its restive curvetings.

"Let me snake it out for you," she suggested.

She tossed the end of a noosed rope over the pine root and bade Bobbie to "Mush!" With memories of its Montana roping days the little brute threw his weight against the straining burden.

The girl had snubbed the other end deftly around the pommel, Western fashion, and as the pony hurled his nine hundred pounds of restless zeal against the burden, the root up-ended slowly, cracked sharply and snapped off. Another rod of road was clear. Emerson removed his hat.

"I'm mightily obliged," he said. "I guess my hands would have yielded up the ghost first. Those confounded things are flexible as violin strings."

"I know it," said the girl. "Many a one have I hacked at, clearing the potato patch."

"I take it, then," hazarded the young man, "that you are something of an agriculturist."

The girl laughed, delighted.

"That's a lovely expression," she declared. "If I could make anything grow I'd be a farmer. As it is I'm just—just an agriculturist. Dad, being a pessimist and refusing to help, is neither."

"I thought a certain amount of clearing was compulsory under the homestead laws," remarked Emerson.

"It is," said the girl. "But we've cleared the legal amount and are just waiting to prove up. We do that on May tenth."

"And afterward?" queried the swamper.

The girl eyed the forest fringe wistfully.

"Afterward," she said softly. "Afterward, I suppose, we'll go back to civilization. We'll sell our timber—to the Seven

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Pines people I think. And if dad is well enough, we'll return home. Mr. McKay says we have about thirty thousand dollars worth. He's promised to scale it for us, unless the Lonesome Lake company is the buyer. Then Mr. Lereaux will act as our representative."

"You'll be glad to leave, I suppose," said Emerson.

"I—I don't know," said the girl. "Dad's asthma is always relieved up here. And I love the still lakes and whispering pines and the funny little rabbits and the deer who come down into Spirit Bay in fly-time. But I'm lonesome for Fifth Avenue, too, and the crowds and shops and everything. I—I hardly know whether I'll be glad or not. If dad—only really gets well——"

Her jet-fringed eyes clouded and she stared very intently at the wrist of one gauntlet.

The swamper thought he understood.

"Well, it was bully good of you to help me out," he declared cheerfully. "We'd still be waltzing 'round and 'round, I guess, if you and Bobbie hadn't come to the rescue."

"Bobbie needs the exercise and I just love to pretend I'm a skidder myself," said the girl gaily. "See you tomorrow."

She swung the quirt lightly and Bobbie, after his customary practise, tore frantically down the road.

Skjarsen, a silent spectator of the incident, essayed to wink broadly after she had gone.

"Bay gosh," he ejaculated, "Ay tank you bane make pretty gude hit wit' her, eh?"

The other's cheeks flooded with dusky red, and the Swede, in his casual glance, thought he noticed that they were already less hollow and leaden pale.

"CORNERPOST" KELLY leaned negligently against the office wall. He was a tall wiry individual with a lean countenance that had an unpleasant habit of twisting itself into saturnine smiles.

"Here comes another one," he observed casually. "Seems like these candy-colored mackinaws are going to be the season's rage in these parts."

Evenson had brought the ratty tote-team to a halt and a man's footsteps crunched briskly across to the door of the office. The door swung open without the formality of previous knocking. A tall, slightly gray-haired man in a mackinaw of identical pattern with Emerson's stared past Kelly at McKay.

"My name's Callahan," he said cheerfully. "I've got the customary number of letters from McQuade, executor of the Mallory estate. Thought I'd stick around a week or two."

McKay's morose countenance brightened.

"Always glad to meet a friend of the Mallorys," he said.

They shook hands. McKay introduced Kelly.

"Glad to meet you," said the newcomer. "I've heard plenty about both of you, aforetime. Old Mallory, Sr., thought nobody on earth could handle a job as you fellows do."

Both woodsmen beamed at the flattery. And the newcomer wisely refrained from any follow-up.

"Suppose I can ramble around the timber a little without getting lost?" he queried.

"Sure," assented McKay. "West of us is the main tote-road. Due north we've got tank-roads, skidding-trails and decking-leads as far as the north end of the lake. East you've got the Lost Squaw. And by the way, in that connection, don't attempt to cross over. There's a crazy Frenchman over there with a one-horse outfit, who's plumb anxious to kill off Lonesome Lakers. A year or two back we got over the line for a few thousand feet and he's been a maniac on the subject ever since."

The newcomer, a keen-faced, rather handsome chap, strikingly gray at the temples, smiled cheerfully.

"Just watch me. I'm not yearning to have a run-in with any guy with a homicidal mania. Told the wife I'd get out of the wilds right side up and intact and I'm going to play that idea to the limit."

There was more conversation of a desultory nature and then McKay took Callahan in tow. For two days they were together a good deal of the time. The guest put up at McKay's cabin and ate at the boss's table. They played poker for small stakes in the evening and McKay regaled the stranger with queer tales of the North country, its superstitions and unwritten laws and unaccountable prejudices.

"Never expect a lumberjack to sleep in a camp with a poplar log in it," he declared. "And if you want to run a rival outfit's

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crew into the timber just whisper that you've seen the camp cat on the ridge-pole of a moonlight evening. Both of them are considered sure portents of disaster."

Business took McKay and Kelly into Chisholm the next afternoon. The stranger resumed his strolls through the Lonesome Lake cuttings. But he didn't stop on the banks of the Lost Squaw. Instead, he followed the stream, under cover of the tangled spruce and balsam until he came to a corresponding thicket on the other side. Then he crossed swiftly and disappeared into the timber beyond.

He followed the new course eastward until he heard the sounds of droning saws and ringing axes. He proceeded with sudden cautious alertness, working through the deep snow as cautiously as a wolverine might work up the wind against the scent of a fresh kill. At the edge of the clearing, he paused in a little thicket of balsam and watched the activities of one of the Seven Pines crews.

After the logs were snaked out by the skidding horses the sawyers performed a very peculiar ceremony. Over the raw new stump they carefully piled all the brush slashed out of the skidways and all the heavy branches lopped off the fallen pines. The operation seemed exceedingly interesting to Mr. Callahan.

"Stump stacking, eh!" he muttered.

His eyes roved over the entire clearing. They failed to discern a single pine stump that had not been similarly buried beneath a little mound of evergreen branches. As quietly as he had come, he retraced his steps. But instead of crossing the Lost Squaw over his old trail he worked cautiously down the east bank. He seemed to have some definite objective. He had caught a glimpse of red through the trees.

So carefully as hardly to dislodge the snow crests on the frosted spruce branches, he crept forward. At the feet of a fallen tamarack he espied Lereaux. The big Frenchman was deeply engrossed in a blue-print chart and two smaller maps roughly scrawled on a yellow pulp paper. Beside him, tied with a rough cord, was a small packet of letters.

This much Callahan could observe from his place of concealment. Then the branches slipped softly back into place and the hawk-like visage of the gray-haired one disappeared from view. A minute later he was creeping cautiously up the prostrate trunk of the tree. On top of the matted mass of roots and moss he paused momentarily, staring down at the manager of the Seven Pines. A moment later he had leaped.

His weight and the momentum of his fall doubled the other like a jack-knife, thrusting his head deep into a drift. He struggled fiercely but Callahan's fist thudded behind the ear twice and the huge quarter-breed went limp. Very deliberately the victor assembled the blue-prints, the diagrams and the small packet of letters. These he scrutinized briefly before thrusting them into the pocket of his mackinaw.

Then he broke into a dog-trot and disappeared into the forest fringe again. Five minutes later he was crossing the glare-ice of Mallard Bay at the south end of Lonesome Lake. At about the same moment Lereaux was staring dazedly up at the serrated skyline, wondering why he was prone in the snow with sharp pains shooting through his head.

As Callahan reached the shore a buckskin pony flashed into view. At sight of the red-and-white mackinaw the girl reined in sharply. The bronco halted with his feet bunched, wolf fashion, and with outthrust ears watched the man. The girl started to speak and then stopped, flushing furiously. The man stared at her for a moment. Then with an air of great deliberation he extracted a white silk handkerchief from his pocket and pressed it lightly to his face. After this extraordinary performance he dropped a little leather case in the snow and strode by the girl without even deigning to glance at her again.

A couple of swampers were coming down the road a few hundred feet behind her. One of them was a slender, rather pale-faced youth, with a red-and-white-checked mackinaw. The girl dismounted and seemed to be tightening the cinches. As she did so she contrived to stoop and grasp the leather packet that had fallen from the other's hand. A moment later girl and horse were disappearing in a cloud of frozen snow crystals.

ARNOLD CALLAHAN seemed to display a singular and unremitting zeal all the rest of the afternoon. He sought to enter the company's office but it was locked. He sauntered into

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the cook-camp and had coffee and pie and then drifted on down to the shore of the lake. Here he engaged a couple of lumberjacks in conversation. They had taken a half-day off to "boil out," and were stirring their steaming socks and shirts in a great bubbling hundred-pound lard can.

They spoke but indifferent English and their response to most of his crisp queries was a blank stare and a resigned shrugging of shoulders, or a brief—

"No savvy."

Back in McKay's cabin he spread out the map and crude diagrams and studied them carefully, making numerous notations in a small memorandum book. Afterward he cut the cord on the packet of letters and read each one, some of them several times. The lean, hawk-like countenance twisted once into an ironic smile of satisfaction.

Afterward he seemed very much interested in McKay's wardrobe. A brown canvas shooting-jacket, pouched and ribbed for shotgun shells, particularly engaged him. He folded the blue-print and the pieces of yellow paper several times and then rolled them into tiny cylinders. These he distributed into the shell pouches. The letters he thrust into the inner pocket. Afterward he placed it back, very carefully, into the dingiest and dustiest corner of the little closet.

That evening at "chuck," Larsen, the straw boss, announced that McKay and Kelly had not returned. There would not be another logging train out of town until ten o'clock the next morning. Immediately after the evening meal, Callahan repaired to the cabin. In half an hour the lights were out. The guest of the Lonesome Lake Lumber Company had retired early.

It was after midnight and exceedingly dark when he emerged again. Black clouds had drifted over the face of the moon and a fine sleety snow had begun to fall. In the shadow of the cabin he waited for almost five minutes, his eyes striving to pierce the oppressive gloom. After reassuring himself that no one else was abroad, he walked slowly over toward the office.

From his trousers pocket he extracted a bunch of keys and inserted one after another into the heavy padlock. None seemed to fit. He pressed the button of a tiny flashlight, shielding the glare from view with his body. The bar was not held by ordinary staples. The whole massive band of steel had been cross-clamped until it presented an exceedingly formidable obstacle.

The midnight prowler seemed not to have exhausted his resources however. He extricated again the big silk handkerchief and tied a very small hard knot in one corner. Grasping it diagonally across he flicked it sharply against the lock. The handkerchief was snapped with such deftness that the knot thudded against the heavy bronze lock with a distinctly audible impact. He tried again. On the third attempt there was a quick metallic click and the lock snapped open.

Slowly he forced the door open. Ahead of him was the massive chest in which reposed the books and other valuables of the company's local executive. As his glance fell upon it he smothered an exclamation of astonishment. For the rays of another dark lantern, reposing upon the floor beneath the table, threw the box into bold relief. A man was kneeling beside it, fitting various keys into the great twin padlocks.

Callahan inserted his hand slowly into his coat under his left arm. The next moment an automatic pistol gleamed in his hand.

"Put 'em up," he commanded in a voice that fairly crackled with menace. "Sky them and stand clear or I'll blow you wide open!"

The other spun around with a startled oath and elevated his hands toward the ceiling. A little steel jimmy clattered to the floor. With his left hand Callahan groped for the flashlight and pressed the catch. The other's hand stood out distinctly, framed in a halo of white light. There was no mistaking the clean-cut features and queer pallor. It was Clendenning, *alias* Jack Emerson, late of Leavenworth!

"Good God!" ejaculated his captor. "You!"

"None other," said Emerson, with a note of relief in his voice. "I was using the drill a minute ago. I guess the noise of that and the howling of the wind prevented me from hearing you work. Suppose we discontinue the strategy stuff."

He lowered his arms deliberately, hooking his fingers in the belt of his mackinaw. Callahan grinned.

"I didn't know you were cracking the crib," he explained easily, "or I wouldn't have blanketed on you. When did you get in?"

"A week ago," responded Emerson. "I

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was hoping to catch the old boy napping but there was nothing to it. So finally I jimmied the window and got down to business. You were in luck to have the right skeleton with you. I couldn't work that outer lock worth a cent."

"Neither could I—with a key," responded Callahan.

In the other's eyes gleamed an expression akin to admiration.

"The old handkerchief stunt, I suppose," he remarked. "I remember when 'Omaha Steve' LaGrange promised to teach it to you. He was certainly the cleverest guy with a lock that ever went up the river."

"He was that," assented Callahan. "How are you coming along?"

Together they bent over the huge chest. Callahan seemed the cleverer worker of the two. Within a minute after he had bent his energies to the task, the lid swung open. Within was a great pile of ledgers, numerous rolls of blue-prints and a black lacquered sheet-steel box marked "Cash" in big letters.

"You glom the histories," remarked Callahan as he picked up the cash-box. "I'll take care of the mazuma."

They were deeply engrossed in the work for the better part of an hour. Then Emerson rose with a sigh of relief.

"All set, I guess," he announced wearily. "Ease the bolts back in and we'll beat it out of here. Only there's no need, this time, of my using the window as an exit."

"So saying, we saunter hence," responded Callahan casually. "And while I think of it: I rolled Lereaux this afternoon. Think I made a good enough haul too. Cached the papers in McKay's duck-shooting togs. I figure that it's about the last place on earth he'd think of looking for them."

"Did the big boy give you much of a battle?" queried his companion interestedly.

"Climbed a windfall and jumped him from the rear," replied the other, tersely. "It was soft. Slipped him a couple of sleep slaps on general principles and ran for it."

Emerson yawned.

"It's been a big night," he muttered. "Guess I'll hit the hay. This swamping job isn't the softest stall on earth."

"You ought to be a guest of the Lonesome Lake Lumber Company," responded Callahan with a grin. "Great friend of the owner and all that sort of thing."

Emerson poked him in the ribs jocosely and they passed out into the night.

5

THE SNOW fell with a ghostly stealth all that night and most of the next day, obliterating the skidways and tote-roads and blotting out beneath its white blanket the telltale tracks of night prowlers, man and beast. About three in the afternoon it cleared off, revealing a June-blue sky with a great frosty sun lowering in the west. With the cessation of the snowfall the wind shifted. A still chillness ensued that froze the surface of the drifts an inch deep and set the still pines to crackling again like the distant rattle of infantry fire.

The increased snowfall augmented the difficulties and unpleasantness of the new road-monkey's task, and he was glad to knock off at Skjarsen's initial hint that they had put in a full day. Before they had walked the mile and a half back to camp the frozen road gleamed blue-green again beneath the radiance of the new-risen moon. After chuck—during which he sat beside Callahan without evincing the slightest recognition—Emerson prepared to turn in.

Lonergan's impromptu concert, however, beguiled him into remaining up a while. Then Larsen called a few intimates to the camp door. They seemed strangely intent upon something and other groups drifted out, impelled by a ready curiosity. Larsen was pointing toward the north. Tamarack Ridge bulked blankly against the green sky, with its faint arc of pallid Northern Lights. And from it, close and clear and wonderfully distinct, came the sustained quavering wail of a wolf-pack.

Emerson tried to visualize himself as lost in that vast wilderness on such a night, without firearms or matches, and listening to the eery wail of the timber wolves. He shuddered with awe of the vision conjured up.

"Ay don' never see them so close lak this," volunteered the straw boss. "Ay'll bat you some poor deer gets h'al, eh?"

The howling was suddenly discontinued. There was a brief silence and then the still air echoed with quick short yelps, for all the world like the barking of a coon dog. One of the men, an old trapper, cursed hoarsely.

"They got the poor devil, whatever it is," he averred. "I've seen them drag deer

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down on glare-ice on Kabitogama on nights like this. They'll howl till the leader touches blood, then the sound breaks up into a chorus of yapping. Afterward they get down to business."

Lanterns began to gleam about the company office. McKay's voice could be heard loudly enjoining some one to show greater speed. Then a little group approached the bunk-house. By that time, with the strange telepathy of the mob, every man in camp was out of doors, unmindful of the freezing air, and staring curiously up into the Stygian blackness of the ridge.

McKay approached, his face seemingly white and drawn in the yellow lantern light.

"All out gang," he commanded crisply. "Callahan took a fool notion to stroll somewhere about an hour ago, according to Craig. His trail leads north. If he doesn't show up *pronto* it's a safe bet that he won't be back. We'll trek up there on general principles anyhow."

As much from a desire for excitement as from any other interest, the whole camp tore madly in for hats and mackinaws. Some of them carried guns. A vaster number were equipped with peaveys and pole-axes. All of them were eagerly intent upon seeing it through. They spread out in a great fan formation and started blithely through the dwarf pine.

Up in the gloomy forest aisles of the ridge a large wolf-pack was holding high carnival. The sustained chorus of howls had been superseded by much snapping and snarling. Evidently there was being waged some brute controversy over the honors of the kill.

Emerson, lighting his way with the dark lantern, soon drew ahead of the crowd. He was panting from the exertion of bucking waist-deep snow, and down his pale face the perspiration streamed unnoticed. Eighty or ninety lumberjacks had spread themselves out into a great crescent, beating the underbrush with much needless noise and tumult. Between the two tips of the great arc, Emerson traveled alone.

As he neared the top of the ridge the snarling died out abruptly. Once or twice he thought he saw green eyes gleaming in the shadows beyond, but these danced and wavered so erratically between tree-trunks and scrub undergrowth, that he could not be certain. Suddenly he was aware that he had crossed a recently broken man-trail. This swerved to the right, and he made better progress through the path of the shattered snow crust.

Abruptly he stopped with a muffled cry. Directly ahead of him in the trail, clearly revealed by the white rays of the powerful little lantern, lay the object of their quest. Callahan's fur hat was off and he lay prone on his face. From the left side of the almost buried hand a thin trickle of blood colored the snow with a scarlet stain. One hand was outstretched as if to grasp the projecting bough that he had not quite reached. The other was crumpled under him. And away from the body, back into denser thickets to the east, led a single man-trail.

Emerson knelt beside the slain man and turned the body over. From under the left eye the blood welled slowly. And the back of the skull was shattered as if by a soft-nosed bullet. The searchers were beating off farther to the right and he shut off the glare of his lantern, quite content to let them go by. They passed on fully a hundred yards to the right, cheering and thumping the underbrush in the exuberance of their wild-goose chase.

Against the red-and-white checks of the mackinaw he noticed a series of gray patches. The dead man's pockets had all been turned inside out. Emerson thrust the lining in again, systematically, and played the rays of his lamp upon the surrounding snow. It revealed a half-burned match and a freshly lit cigaret. The dead man's left hand was gloved but the right was bare. Emerson searched about in the drift until he extricated the other gauntlet. Then very carefully he cast all the articles into the snow again and turned the body over on its face.

Beyond the first circle of light he could see the thousands of imprints that marked the closest approach of the circling wolf-pack. The scent of the kill was strong, and lured. But the man smell was insistent and threatening. They had paused to bicker and yelp before gathering the courage for a massed attack upon the strange figure lying so still in the blue-green trail, beneath the white glare of the moon.

The discoverer of the luckless Callahan started to follow the trail eastward. Then he reflected with a muttered imprecation that the heedless rush of the Lonesome

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Lake crew had doubtlessly obliterated that trail. They were already returning, as he could see by an occasional lantern flare glinting through the trees. Cupping his hands about his mouth he raised his voice in a long penetrating—

"*Co-hee!*"

The cry of "We've found him" spurred jaded limbs to greater speed. The men halted in a little circle about the body, with an instinctive awe of the dead. McKay, who had been working away east, thrust his way through the throng.

"You found him?" he queried.

"Yes," said Emerson. "I sort of drifted away from the rest of the gang. Most of the pack noises came from over here, I thought."

"Touch him?" asked the boss.

"Turned him over on his face for a minute," replied the other. "I wanted to make sure that he was dead."

The men pressed closer with exclamations of wonderment as the pallid face of the corpse, with the telltale purple splotch beneath the eye, was turned again toward the sky.

"No wolves did that," volunteered Emerson quietly.

"Obviously not," responded McKay shortly. "It looks like a big night's work—for somebody!"

His pale-gray eyes roamed in a quick keen scrutiny over the faces of the crowd. They stared back stolidly, with an occasional restless stirring as if the unspoken question in his eyes filled them with foreboding.

BACK IN the company office McKay and Emerson faced each other across the pine table. Between them stood a quart flask of whisky and an open box of cigars.

"Whoever killed Callahan," declared the boss, "must have fired from that little cluster of evergreens. The trail that you say you saw may have been made by his coming up afterward to make sure that his job was done. It's funny that none of the boys can remember having heard any shooting."

"There needn't have been any noise," objected Emerson. "A Maxim silencer could have eliminated that. And it would be just the stunt for an assassin to use one, too. He probably waited a long time for the opportunity."

McKay nodded, his brow furrowed with lines of keen anxiety.

"It'll be great news for the Mallorys," he declared gloomily. And then with sudden irrelevance: "I wonder who's a good enough gunman in these parts to clip a fellow under the eye at two hundred yards with the trail all dappled with moon shadows."

"To me," said Emerson, "that seems the easiest part of it. Two of the exhibits—as they would say in court—consist of a match half-burned and a recently lighted cigaret. The snow apparently extinguished both. Well, a man lighting a cigaret against even a light breeze will cup the flame in his hands. No doubt you've seen the effect in freak photographs that movie actors and the like are fond of posing. For two or three seconds, Callahan's countenance was an illuminated target. A man, let us say, who was accustomed to 'shining' deer, would have no difficulty in getting a shot home in that time. No doubt he would have got his man anyway, but it's a safe bet that Callahan's cigaret really cost him his life."

"He covered his trail well," said McKay wearily.

The other nodded.

"Breaking out on the glare-ice where the wind-sweep between the Manitou and the mainland keeps the drifts open, was a clever stunt," he admitted. "It shows a —— lot of planning. No doubt the murderer knew that by tomorrow the snow would have drifted sufficiently to blot his trail wherever he broke for cover again, farther up or down the lake."

"It's a good hypothesis," assented the other. "But it doesn't answer the queerest question of all. What was Callahan doing up there on the ridge alone at that hour?"

"I think," said Emerson slowly, his eyes meeting those of the boss in a very level stare, "I think that Arnold Callahan was croaked off by the man he was going to see!"

His mind flashed back abruptly to Callahan's allusion to the fight by the windfall. Perhaps Lereaux of Seven Pines wanted his documents back. He glanced again at McKay. The manager of the Lonesome Lake outfit was inscribing aimless patterns on the table with a blunt pencil.

"I wouldn't be surprised," he said, resuming his own discourse, "if a handsome

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swarthy gentleman with a weakness for beaver coats and embroidered moccasins could answer a lot of embarrassing questions if he saw fit."

"Why Lereaux?" queried McKay.

Emerson shrugged his shoulders.

"Perhaps he heard that Callahan was one of the Lonesome Lake owners," he suggested. "I've heard that these breeds were vindictive devils. And he made a big war talk to me about how hard he was, and how he yearned for the scalps of some of our crowd."

"I'd like to fasten it on him, the —— snake," ejaculated McKay. Beneath his beetling brows his pale eyes gleamed fiercely: "Do you think there's any way we can frame to do it?"

"I've seen some classy 'dicks' work in my time," said Emerson slowly. "A few strands of wool on a projecting branch, for instance, might turn the trick. Or half a dozen little glass beads with a wisp of colored thread in them. Many a clever crook has gone over the road from just such trifling details as that."

"I guess that's all we'd need," assented McKay. "Only it doesn't clear up the biggest puzzle of all. Why did Callahan go up to see Lereaux, if he did go up for that purpose? And if he didn't have a rendezvous with Lereaux for any reason, then who was the party who hid in the evergreen tangle until the poor devil lit his cigaret in the trail?"

Emerson smiled sardonically.

"When we've cleared up a few such little sidelights on the case it will be about all over but the court's instructions to the jury!"

"They used to say up in the Klondike," said McKay dryly, "that all a man needed for a pay-streak was a vein of quartz that showed enough color. And that, I've noticed, is about all ninety per cent. of us were short on."

"I gather the point," said Emerson. "But the end is not yet on the whole affair, perhaps. In the meantime let's sleep on it."

He strolled back toward the bunk-house, groping rather aimlessly in his pocket for a match. He pulled out a stubby pipe and stared at it with an exclamation of astonishment.

"Now, where the deuce—" he muttered aloud.

Hastily he assembled the other articles. One of the number was a blunt-bladed jack-knife with the initials A. C. There was a small ivory match-case, a red memorandum book and two or three sheets of paper.

Comprehension dawned slowly in the swamper's eyes.

"Callahan's," he exclaimed aloud. "I remember now we both wore our coats into the cook-camp. They were on the bench together and——"

His spoken meditation ceased. He was at the door of the bunk-house.

All the lamps were extinguished but one. Within the long, shadowy structure rose an endless volume of crescendo snores. Wet socks steamed from cedar poles over the roaring camp-stoves. The air was heavy with stale tobacco-smoke and the respirations of ninety men. It seems an unwritten law of the North country that there should be no attempts at ventilating the bunk-house. Red blood and healthy lungs seem to have always triumphed over that trifling handicap.

Emerson stood there for almost five minutes staring down the long tiers of double-decked bunks. Then he walked over to the single lamp and glanced hastily through the papers. Two or three were apparently valueless memoranda. A third was the red notebook, crammed with figures and citations. The fourth was a little folded sheet of cream-tinted note-paper.

He read it once, and then, as if doubting the evidence of his eyes, turned up the lamp-wick and perused it again.

It was a very brief message. And it was written in a delicate feminine hand with purple ink:

> Please come up to the usual meeting-place tonight. I have something tremendously important to tell you. I'll come after dad's asleep to avert any suspicion he might have if he saw me taking the saddle out of the cabin.
>
> M. F.

There was no mistaking the delicately inscribed initials. And the quality of the stationery bespoke a discrimination hardly to be found elsewhere in the vicinity of Lonesome Lake. The young man's jaw set grimly.

"Apparently," he muttered, "even Mr. Glendenning, sometime Leavenworth trusty, might learn a few new angles to the old panel game up here in the tall uncut."

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OVER in the east a few straggling clouds obscured the moon. Northward, dancing and flickering like great ghost-fingers of red and green, the rays of the aurora triumphed in the night. It was intensely cold and under the little buckskin's hoofs the frozen snow crackled almost explosively. Muriel Fitzhammond patted his neck encouragingly as she turned him off the trail and set him to crunching the stiffened snow-crust through virgin wilderness.

The collar of the girl's foxskin jacket was turned up to hood the little pink ears, and a white fur cap crowned her shimmering hair. Over each gauntleted wrist was strapped a little metallic instrument that gleamed strangely in the shadows. One was a luminous wrist watch and the other a luminous compass. She consulted them from time to time, her brow puckering with concern. The bronco was working his way through snow that was belly-deep and his stertorous breathing attested his weariness.

Past Tamarack Ridge, horse and rider descended into the tangled cedar where only a goat-like adroitness prevented a broken leg for the bronco and serious injury for the rider. Further on, the cedar gave way to spruce and the horse's shoulders bucked again the deep drifts that gather in the lee of a hill. At the top she reined in and listened intently.

Ahead of her, through the last fringe of trees, gleamed the snowy expanse of a homesteader's clearing. In the center of it, a black smudge in the green light, bulked a cabin. The inanimate object engaged the girl's keen attention for a long time. Then she tossed the reins over the buckskin's head and groped in the off saddle-bag. Something that glinted feebly in the light of the flaming aurora was transferred to a capacious jacket pocket.

At the door the girl paused and stared fearsomely within. The gloomy atmosphere was redolent with the strange smell of bark and resin and musty straw peculiar to abandoned cabins. Her flashlight, describing a quick circuit of the interior, revealed the decay and ruin of a trapper's cabin reverting to the persistent wilds. One by one its fiery eye sought out the objects therein—the rusty stove, the dusty bunk, the pine table with unpeeled birch legs and the frayed and battered saloon calendars—all of the paraphernalia that the men of the wilderness stretches assemble lovingly as the components of a home.

Lying along the wall, bottomside up, was a small birchbark canoe. The perennial birch still gleamed firm and yellow, but the pitch seams were black and broken and the rawhide welts almost crumbled into dust. It had been many years since Gus Lauzon had left it there. Something of the loyalty of the tin soldier to *Little Boy Blue* seemed to hallow the ruined treasures.

Muriel found time to wonder what had become of Gus. And while she wondered she poked the dusty straw timidly to ascertain that no creature lurked within, before seating herself gingerly on the very edge of the bunk. Outside the sound of crunching snow was audible and a tall figure limned itself in the doorway.

"You're late," the girl's voice reproved severely.

"I am," admitted the newcomer. "I was following a stale trail. Picked it up on Tamarack Ridge near where—where your friend Callahan got his. Followed it out on to glare-ice, and couldn't pick it up again."

"I am not interested," said the girl coolly. "Your message said that you—that you could tell me something I must know—that it was urgent!"

McKay struck a match. In its tiny flare the girl saw his face. The eyes were abnormally bright and the huskiness of his speech, hitherto mistaken for hoarseness, seemed to confirm a suspicion that flashed across her mind.

"You don't mind my smoking?" he queried, puffing at his cigar and leaning against the wall.

"Please don't manufacture amenities," said the girl crisply. "It is too utterly absurd that we should be meeting like this unless—unless what you have to tell me justifies it."

"It does," answered McKay. He had dropped the guise of solicitude. "And it's about Callahan, too, just as Ivan told you. That night up on the ridge—when our enterprising convict friend found the body—I noticed an interesting set of circumstances. One of them was pony tracks—pony tracks in two feet of snow. You know how many people go in for that sort of thing up here?

"Well, I wondered mightily. I wondered

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some more when I observed that the tracks curved around toward that place in the trail where a person hiding in a clump of evergreens could get a good view of whoever happened to be traveling north on it. Lereaux tells me he's seen you knock a squirrel galley west at a hundred yards. No doubt that degree of accuracy would warrant a try at a man's head at half the distance—particularly if he made himself a lighted target."

The girl gasped.

"How—how do you know he did? That is," she corrected desperately, "what do you mean by 'lighted'?"

Her companion laughed exultantly.

"We're getting on," he declared. "It isn't the facts then, but just the details, that stump you? Well, we found a half-burned match and a freshly-lighted cigaret. That left only one question in my mind. That was, 'Why?' I knew you two had been seen together. I didn't wonder at that. He wasn't a bad looker for all his frosted locks. I suppose when you found out that he didn't mean all the things he'd whispered——"

"Don't you dare," cried the girl, a catch in her voice for all its sharpness. "Don't you dare to talk to me that way. Why I——"

"We're a long, long way from home," interrupted the other. "The theatricals aren't of much account. What I was going to say was this: no one need ever know that you croaked Callahan. You know what I've asked you a dozen times. Well, the offer still holds good. I'm not squeamish, even if——"

The girl's footsteps echoed on the pole floor.

"Stand aside," she cried in a choked voice. "If you don't——"

"If I don't—" drawled the other, leisurely interposing his gigantic frame between her and the door, "what?"

The girl thrust her hand into her pocket, but before she could draw the weapon the man's fist had closed like a vise on her wrist.

"Not so hasty, girlie," he chuckled. "I'm not that easily bluffed. I want to say again that I love you. Surely this time——"

The girl's hysterical scream was smothered against the man's mackinaw. Her lithe form was helpless in his embrace. As they struggled in the rays of McKay's dark lantern, their shadows danced grotesquely on the farther wall. One arm encircled her waist and the other began to force her head back. His back was toward the old canoe.

It rolled over suddenly, with a prodigious crackling of aged struts and crunching of broken bark. A man sprang out of it. He wore a brown mackinaw and a black felt hat. Over his face was a masking silk handkerchief. Quite deliberately he aimed a blow at the larger man's unprotected jaw.

The other's head snapped back sharply and his grasp on the girl loosened. The second smash sent him into the table. The aged structure collapsed, smashing the dark lantern and plunging the cabin again in darkness. The girl shrank dazedly into the shelter of the bunk. Her recent assailant was cursing horribly and she could hear him as he extricated himself from the wreckage of broken boards. In the dense gloom they circled cautiously, kicking aside chairs and pails and benches for clearer space.

Sometimes the antagonists were briefly silhouetted against the white background of the open door. At last the larger man sprang upon his attacker. The other seemed to turn his back. He caught the girl's assailant by one wrist and with a quick thrust hurled him over his shoulder. The vanquished one's head thudded heavily upon the pole floor and then the cabin was abruptly quiet again, save for the audible breathing of the fighters and the sobs of the girl.

"Come on," commanded the victor sharply. Obediently the girl followed. Out in the clearing, beneath the white rays of the risen moon, she stared with startled eyes at the masked figure.

"Never do anything as foolish again," he commanded. The folds of the silk handkerchief muffled his voice. "And go home as fast as you can travel."

"And you?" asked the girl.

"I," answered the other deliberately, "am going to back-track for glare-ice."

Five minutes after their departure the boss of Lonesome Lake stirred and groaned.

GLEN McKAY proceeded toward the banks of the Lost Squaw in a very remarkable fashion. At intervals he would leap abruptly into the covert of bushes on either side of the path and

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describe an arc that brought him into the back trail some five or six hundred feet in the direction from which he was proceeding. Each time he did so he waited for some minutes in the shelter of the trees before resuming the trail.

After this slow and laborious method of progress had undergone three or four repetitions, he struck out boldly for the banks of the stream. Over his shoulder gleamed a double-bitted ax with the customary heavy round oak handle. Arriving at the shore of the stream he watched the other bank curiously for a moment and then buried one gleaming blade deep into the heart of a small balsam.

This once accomplished he turned abruptly and was lost again behind a bend in the winding trail. The moonlight gleamed on the other blade of the ax and dappled the long heavy shaft with fantastic patterns of light and shadow. The man in the brown mackinaw, the lower half of whose face was shrouded in a black silk handkerchief, continued to crouch behind a muskeag hummock and stare at that polished handle.

Anon his eyes would roam back along his own trail, paralleling that taken by the boss of Lonesome Lake just widely enough tc lie beyond the arc of the other man's curious doubling maneuvers. Then he would scrutinize the other shore through the fringe of trees. An hour passed. A whisky-jay watched him curiously and an owl hooted persistently from a branch directly overhead.

Then the masked man rose to his feet. Stealthily he thrust out his arm until his fingers closed around the ax handle. With a quick tug he jerked it loose and drew it back into the evergreen screen. Gripping the shaft firmly with his left hand he applied pressure with the right. The end of the polished handle seemed to yield. It turned two or three times and came off. The interior was revealed as a hollow cylinder about an inch in diameter. Within was a packet wrapped in a red bandanna handkerchief. The man unwrapped it quickly. The contents were revealed as a thick roll of greenbacks.

He detached two or three, holding them against the rays of the flashlight and peering at them with anxious eyes. Afterward he thrust the detached bills into his pocket. A moment later he groped in his mackinaw and took out three others. These he restored to the original packet, wrapping it carefully in the bandanna handkerchief and thrusting it back into the hollow handle.

Afterward he screwed the false top on carefully and sank the blade back into the young balsam. Creeping again into his place of concealment he waited. From the other bank there flashed a buckskin bronco. It broke cover just north of the last skidway and slid down the precipitous incline with the agility of an otter. The girl riding astride in the heavy stock saddle flicked its flank with her quirt and the horse floundered through the deep snow and up the nearer bank. At the little balsam she reined in sharply and grasped the handle of the ax.

Jerking it forth she pivoted her horse and disappeared in the direction from which she had come. Long after the panting bronco had disappeared in the thickets across the Lost Squaw the man with the black mask stared eastward.

The buckskin, meantime, had been reined in at the door of the Seven Pines office. Pierre Lereaux emerged from the door and greeted the girl cheerily.

"*Merci, ma'moiselle,*" he said, extending his hand. "You 'ave done well to rescue for me *mon petite* ax. Always I forgot it, an' always I worrie! Some day, so sure lak h'al, these peegs from Lonesome Lake will steal eet, an' leave me mos' heartbreak, eh?"

The girl laughed gurglingly.

"It was a wise precaution on Nature's part to make your head and body all one piece, *m'sieu,*" she said. "On an average of once a week I rescue your ax and bring it back to camp. Why don't you chain it to your wrist or something?"

The quarter-breed's dark eyes gleamed at her merriment.

"If thee beautiful *ma'moiselle* suggests eet," he responded suavely, "what can poor Pierre do but obey, yes?"

He tossed the rescued implement carelessly in with a stack of others in one corner of the little room.

"For the reward I have mos' gran' maple-sugar," he said. "From une squaw by Namekan I get eet."

He brought out a great, golden-brown cake of the sugar, wrapping it in a newspaper and thrusting it into the nearest

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saddle-bag. For a moment the two looked into each other's eyes and the Frenchman's grip on the pommel tightened. The girl's color mounted slightly and she glanced away.

"For such a compensation, *mon ami*," she said, "I will redeem your ax always without complaint."

And during her reply Bobbie had been neck-reining away from the patently-worshipful lumberjack. And at the conclusion of it, before his ponderous gallantry might detain her further, she was racing madly back toward the Lost Squaw.

CORNERPOST KELLY selected another cigar from the boss's box and cut the end of it off with his jack-knife.

"Brunswick & Berry," he remarked, "were the safest fences in the bunch. What they wanted was the sticks. So far as title guarantees and stumpage abstracts were concerned, they just didn't exist. I was —— sorry to see them pull out of Rainy Lake City."

"I was thinking that Higgins, Salter & Kennedy would do," replied McKay. "A couple of million feet just now would bring their season's cut up to worth-while figures."

"Maybe," assented Kelly. "But it's a certainty that your hand can't show in the deal and Salter knows that I high-graded the old Hawley mine in the days of the Mine Center gold rush. And I'd be afraid to hit any of the American Pine Company's mills because they've got association detectives back of every foot of stuff they handle."

"It's the Higgins-Kennedy crowd, then, just the same," said McKay decisively. "They're the last outposts of the good old bunch of mill-men that 'ud push anything they got their hands on through the buzzers with no questions asked. We'd better place the cut there or let it rot. Once a first-class rumpus got under way the Mallory outfit would wake up."

"I thought they had an itch to learn something when this guy Callahan came up," assented Kelly. "Shippin' him home in a pine box may not allay suspicion either. I saw him sneakin' over along the east bank of the Little Squaw one day. He seemed a —— of a lot interested in Lereaux's stump-stacking of the slashin's."

"I thought he was a 'dick' the minute I lamped him," admitted the boss. "And his tactics were about as obvious as you'd expect from a regular 'harness bull'. If the Mallorys smell a rat they ought to be pushing another man into the field. To date we haven't had any more 'friends of the family' snooping around!"

"I haven't any confidence in Lereaux," objected the crusier. "Three good, sharp questions would tangle that frog-eater into a knot. If we ever send him to explain the Seven Pines system of marketing sticks they'd——"

McKay checked him impatiently.

"I'm not locoed," he snapped. "And I won't use Lereaux. We've got a chap right here in camp who sold a million dollars' worth of fake mining stock before the postal authorities crimped his game. He broke out of 'stir' and isn't crazy to get back. He can wear a white collar and sling language well enough to make the Higgins-Kennedy people believe he really represents a logging company."

"All right," said Kelly. "Let him go to it. It's my last year in the sticks anyhow. The swamps are going and the labor-unions are beginning to raise Cain and the old game's pinching out."

McKay nodded.

"We're in the twilight of the gods," he admitted. "And I'm keen to be through, myself."

"The girl—" began the cruiser, hesitatingly.

"The girl what?" queried his companion crisply.

His pale eyes flamed with white light.

"I think she knows too much," insisted the Irishman doggedly. "She has the durndest faculty of being around when the payroll ax goes over, and when we're burning slashings in the Spring and all that. If she ever found Lereaux's lost chart with those Lost Squaw forties marked "fire loss" the stall would give up the ghost."

"She won't," declared the boss sharply. "I overheard a chin-fest of theirs one day down on the Little Squaw. Seem's like she was getting some sort of information from the Seven Pines tactics. Anyway I was wise when we got that note from that little sorrel-topped kid of McCarthy's who brought it over. I trailed him up that night and detoured so as to cut him off. I knew she'd be under cover somewhere. It wasn't

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their game to be seen together at all."

"Doesn't seem to me as if that little deal on Tamarack would look good to witnesses," grunted the cruiser.

"It wouldn't," snarled McKay. "Only there weren't any. She got there just in time to find him croaked. And that note and the pony tracks behind the ridge would swing whoever you fastened the nag to, I'll tell you that. If she ever gets curious about the Seven Pines Logging Company again I'll begin to be a heap interested in the party who croaked off Callahan!"

"And when the ice goes out——"

"She'll go with me," declared the boss. "Her old man'll be under the moss by that time. He's slippin' fast!"

"How about Lereaux?" chuckled the cruiser.

"Leave him to me. The girl hangs around there more'n here because she swore she'd never set foot in Lonesome Lake from the day I was fool enough to try to kiss her out there near the tank. That's why she framed those mysterious night meetings on Tamarack instead of just dropping into camp casual-like. She's the most frostily independent little devil I ever saw!"

"She seemed pretty friendly with this other guy too," remarked Kelly, "the one with the same kind of rig-out."

"He's the chap who's going to peddle the cut," explained McKay. "And all I'll have to do to make him sit up and bark is just murmur 'Leavenworth' once or twice."

RAINY LAKE CITY fronts the river where the Lost Squaw curves slightly westward and pours its amber-colored swamp-water into the larger stream. The atmosphere at all seasons of the year is heavy with the peculiar sour odor of freshly-cut pine and its great red mills by day, and plume-flaming burners by night, mark it before the traveler approaching by train or boat can see the cluster of unpainted shacks and sheet-steel buildings dignified as the "town."

By day and night the roar of the great bandsaws is unremitting. Logs pour down the Rainy and enter into the booms that tighten inexorably until the great brown sticks have been gaffed by the endless chain lift and thrust against the triumphantly-screaming steel blades. Other logs come down the Lost Squaw and the Rat Root and the Big Fork, to join the army of fallen forest-monarchs herded together in the great booms.

On some gleam the red clay of the smaller streams and on the bark of others are the raw gashes where the rock teeth of the white rapids slashed them savagely as they sped by. Day and night they are sluiced through sorting-hatches where the calk-booted river representatives of a score of different companies pick them for various boom destinations.

Tall, wiry river-men stroll up and down the streets, their attire distinguished from that of the lowlier lumberjacks by the substitution of calked boots for rubbers and the greater grandeur of their blue or crimson shirts and gaudy mackinaws. Fine sawdust drifts through the air, filming the Winter snow and Summer dust.

Great cities of regularly-stacked lumber-piles spread about all sides of the town, cities that are ever being built and demolished, and that yet contrive to look always imposing from a distance, like the marble mansions of ancient Rome. Log-laden trains roar in and lumber-laden freights screech farewell.

In the "hot ponds" the steam-jets lift their billowy breath to the Winter sky and the newest sacrifices to the gold lust of the lumbermen begin their last trip up the chute. Down at the Higgins, Salter & Kennedy No. 1 Mill, Jack Emerson watched the agile "boom cats" speed deftly over the undulating logs in the pond. In his pocket reposed the statistics given him by McKay.

They recited that two million six hundred thousand feet of prime white and Norway pine would be delivered in booms at the sorting-sluice for the sum of twenty-six thousand dollars cash, first payment to be made after joint scaling of the cut and second to be made when the sawmill run was completed. The terms were marvelously favorable to prospective purchasers, and Mr. Salter, the only resident member of the firm, had been very receptive of them.

The young man, whose three months in the woods had made him a ruddy-cheeked robust, young giant, was patently pleased by his success. He shook hands with the older man and assured him that the logs would be through on schedule time. Afterward he lighted one of the cigars given him at the conference and sauntered down the town's main thoroughfare.

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He was turning the corner of the Lumberjack's Lodge—"All Rooms Fifty Cents"—when he almost collided with a young lady approaching briskly from the opposite direction.

THE BEGAN to murmur the usual trite apologies when he chanced to glance into her face. His speech terminated quite abruptly, and the girl's gray eyes mirrored her astonishment.

"You?" she exclaimed.

"None other," said the young man cheerfully. "This is certainly an unexpected pleasure!"

For some reason the young lady was not disposed to encourage the banality. Her splendid eyes searched his countenance keenly.

"Why are you here?" she demanded peremptorily.

"Confidential business for the most exalted boss of Lonesome Lake," he replied flippantly. "Much heavy secrecy. Couldn't think of breathing a word of my mission."

"You don't have to," asserted Miss Fitzhammond." She tilted her little, rounded chin defiantly. "I know. You are selling the Seven Pines' cut!"

"You've guessed it," assented the newly-constituted sales representative.

"Do you know," queried the girl, speaking very slowly and deliberately, "that the Seven Pines is only a ghost concern?"

"A ghost concern?" echoed the young man, his brow creasing with perplexity. "Now what the deuce is that?"

"It's a shadow company constituted to steal logs from legitimate outfits and sell them independently. McKay of Lonesome Lake has been doing that for years. Every stick of timber cut by Seven Pines is on Lonesome Lake land. Every dollar of Seven Pines operating-expenses is borne by the Lonesome Lake people on a padded payroll. Did you—did you not know that when you agreed to act as sales representative for McKay and Kelly?"

The girl's eyes were lifted to the bronzed countenance above her. She stood very straight and eager and determined and after a while Emerson's eyes roved away. He stared at the steam-jets lifting lazily from the brown surface of the hot-pond. When he spoke his voice was rather husky.

"Yes," he said slowly, "I knew all that."

"And yet you're helping—helping to steal from the concern that employs you?"

"I told McKay it was a rotten deal," he said. "And in turn he reminded me that my name was Edgar Clendenning, that I had escaped from a Federal penitentiary and that I'd go back there the minute I raised a finger in opposition to him."

"Oh," said the girl.

Her face was very white and against the quick palor of the recently-flushed cheeks the jet-fringed eyes had a dazed and haunted look.

"So—so you've—a—a——"

But the proper designation for the young man who stared away across the busy hot-pond, was not uttered.

River-men and lumberjacks sauntered by, staring with candid interest at the girl's beauty and with more or less open hostility at the young man fortunate enough to be seen talking to her. But the pair were oblivious to these things.

"Why—why," asked the girl desperately, a little catch in her voice, "couldn't you go back and—and serve your sentence. It's never too late to be square. Then perhaps the Mallorys would have helped you to get a pardon for—for what you'd have done for them!"

"I—I guess you've never seen Leavenworth," said the man, dully.

He turned abruptly and strode away up the street.

The girl stared after him. Her red lips quivered and the tears gleamed in her long lashes. A moment later she was running swiftly after him.

"Please," she said, placing one slender hand on his arm.

Emerson turned.

"I'm here to get the sheriff of Koochiching County to arrest McKay for murder," she said. "I have proof that he killed Arnold Callahan. When these disclosures are made it means the end of that crooked combine between McKay, Kelly and Lereaux. I thought I'd warn you. It was cowardly of McKay to take advantage of what he knew about you. Why don't you leave now?"

Her grasp tightened with the intense earnestness of her appeal.

"Why don't you cross the line and go into the great Canadian West, where men seem somehow to have another chance to—to straighten crooked trails?"

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"It—it was just splendid," she said, her cheeks flushed and her eyes bright with admiration. "Two or three years isn't long and—and I'll wait for you—just as I promised."

The floor creaked under the heavy tread of the sheriff and one deputy departing with their prisoners. At the mention of a two-thousand-dollar reward the other one had displayed a strange reluctance about going. He stood at the door staring in at the man and the girl.

"You won't have to, little girl," said the man gently. "If Mr. McKay had read the papers as assiduously the next day he might have observed that Edgar Clendenning committed suicide in an Omaha hotel. I came up here primarily to get the alcohol out of my system, and incidentally to look things over. His little mistake aided my purpose admirably, however. The belief that he held the whip hand made it easier to gather the facts."

The girl was staring up at him, her eyes aglow with wonderment.

"Then—then who *are* you? she asked softly.

The man laughed and crushed her in his arms until one little pink ear was very close to his lips.

"I am Gordon Mallory," he said. "Son of Old Man Mallory, and presently chief owner of the Lonesome Lake outfit. Are you glad, dear?"

The deputy sheriff whose interest had been whetted by McKay's allusion to a big reward prepared to depart by stealth. But in the single glance he had stolen at the girl's rosy face and trusting eyes, he felt that there had been much compensation for the disappointment. After all, there are some things that can have no cash equivalent.

A SAILOR'S LIFE

by HARRY KEMP

OH, A sailor hasn't much to brag—
An oilskin suit and a dunnage bag.
But, howsoever humble he be,
By the Living God, he has the sea!

The long, white leagues and the foam of it,
And the heart to make a home of it,
On a ship that kicks up waves behind
Through the blazing days and tempests blind.

Oh, a sailor hasn't much to love—
But he has the huge, blue sky above,
The everlasting waves around,
That wash with an eternal sound.

So bury me, when I come to die,
Where the full-sailed, heeling clippers ply;
Give up the last cold body of me
To the only home that I have—the sea!

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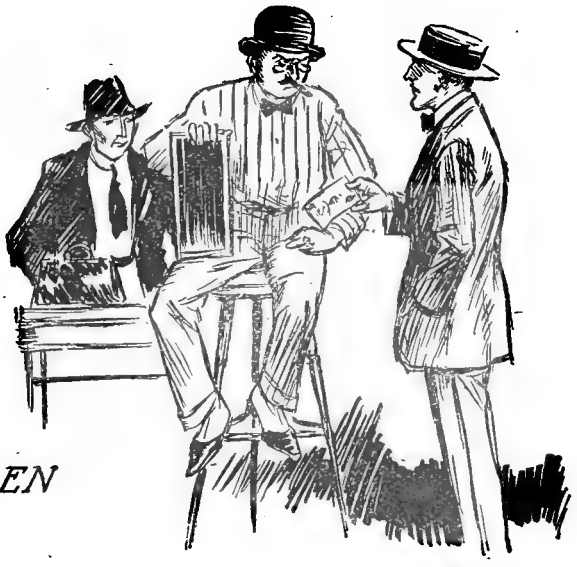
WHOLE HOG OR NONE



BY

CLARENCE L. CULLEN

WITH nine horses entered, the fourth race on the card that day was a stake affair. Lanigan, detective-sergeant on plain-clothes duty at the track, "liked" a twenty-to-one outsider so much that he decided to gamble two dollars on that one to win.

It was Lanigan's semi-monthly pay-day, and his clean new one-hundred-dollar bill remained unbroken. On his way to the betting-ring he went through his clothes to see if he could assemble two dollars over and above this important piece of currency, his wages for two weeks. He hated to "flash a century note" on a book-maker in making a "piking" two-dollar bet. But he found that he would have to do just that. He was only eighty cents strong, barring the beautiful yellow bill with the "C" at its corners.

Shouldering his way through the jammed betting-ring, he reached the heavily-besieged corner where "Virginia" Farrell, one of the "big-store" bookmakers, did business. Lanigan and this bull-necked, hard-mouthed layer of odds had been race-track friends for years. The detective-sergeant, since first he had been assigned to race-track duty, had made his small bets with Farrell, a stormy, quarrelsome gambler, notorious for the foul abuse which he would heap upon patrons of his book upon the slightest provocation or no provocation at all.

A squirming, elbow-gouging mob was beleaguering Farrell's stool to get their bets down on the stake event. Lanigan, wriggling into a position directly in front of the book-maker, failed to notice the scowl on the face of the choleric layer of odds. He drove his hand into his trousers pocket to get out his yellow bill.

It was at this instant that the book-maker bent his fierce gaze upon the detective-sergeant.

"Aw, beat it!" he bawled at Lanigan. "I don't want no pikin' bets. This is a stake race, and nothin' less than ten dollars goes for a bet. Git out o' th' road an' give th' money bettors room, will yuh?"

Lanigan suddenly felt as cold as a fish frozen in a cake of ice. Immediately after that he was swept by a hot crimson surge.

His one-hundred-dollar bill was blood money, which is the kind of money that you have to work to get. It was the month's rent, the grocer's and butcher's and milkman's and iceman's bills. There was a call for every nickel of it to square household bills. He could not afford to bet even the two dollars which he had intended to wager on the chance of the horse he "liked."

But he thrust his crackling one-hundred-dollar bill within two inches of the bawling-out bookmaker's nose.

"Why, you big lard-jowled leatherhead," he said quietly to the book-maker, "who ever told you that you could call a man's bet before he made it? You're laying

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twenty to one against Bengal. I'll take a hundred of that. And get a move on—I'm busy!"

The book-maker, thus surprisingly "called," grinned unconvincingly. There was a murmur of approbation from the swaying crowd. The layer, hearing this, was, for once, so flabbergasted that he was unequal to a "come-back." He took the yellow bill and registered the bet without a word. There was a subdued cheer from the mob for Lanigan when he backed away from the book-maker.

Lanigan's reaction set in about half a minute later when, walking to the paddock to see the horses saddled for the stake race, the ghastly meaning of what he had done broke in upon him. Rent, bills for food already eaten, gas bill, and this was the month for his quarterly insurance payment—*whew!* Not to mention a bit of money that he was going to give his wife for direfully needed raiment out of the hundred. He recalled with a flush of self-reproach that, though the hot weather had come, she still was wearing her weather-faded Winter hat.

He remembered having heard her remark, a day or two before, that she was starting the Summer with three pairs of very much darned stockings, and two shirt-waists, left-overs from last year—and she had not said it complainingly, but rather by way of jest. He thought of the scores of mean little one and two dollar bets on losing horses that had eaten large holes in his salary since the beginning of the racing season—and his cheery, courageous wife, a country-bred girl whom he had "picked out for himself" when he himself had been a farm lad, with hardly enough clothes to permit of her taking a walk by daylight!

And here he had gone and bet half a month's pay, for every dollar of which he had clamorous need, out of pure bull-headed bravado, for the idiotic purpose of combing down a roughneck book-maker to whom a hundred dollars wasn't even respectable gum money—and bet the hundred, too, on a plug that probably had about one chance in a million, instead of one in twenty, to win!

"What I need," Lanigan said to himself as he watched the horses milling and rearing at the starting-post, "is a large, heavy-rolled nose-ring, and a keeper with a pair of brass knucks and a piece of gas-pipe."

Then Bengal jumped out and won the stake race. The horse that Lanigan had "liked" just two dollars' worth at the long price, but that he had backed a hundred dollars' worth in his blaze of anger, did not win by a nose on the wire, after having been shut off by other horses for most of the distance, or anything whatever like that. Bengal simply got away from the barrier in the lead, increased his lead at every jump, went about his business all the time, was never in danger for an instant, and won, pulled double, in a common canter, under wraps, by two lengths, eased to a walk.

The detective-sergeant, outwardly calm by a huge effort, but his heart thumping, went to the betting-ring and got into Farrell's pay-off line to "cash."

"So you copped, eh?" the book-maker, with a leer, said to him. "You're a lucky stiff—but no hard feelin's, eh? Anyhow, you'll be handin' the wad back to me inside th' next week or so."

Lanigan, his mind seething, scarcely heard the book-maker. He was too intent upon the agreeable job of watching the book-maker's cashier count twenty-one one-hundred-dollar bills into his hand.

"Some roll, pal!" he heard a low-pitched voice say in his ear.

He turned, to find "Fingers" Fraley, a "gun" and all-around crook of under-world renown, looking over his shoulder. Lanigan, in common with all of the headquarters detectives, knew the man well. The crook, who was mysteriously immune from the hand of the law, had been of decided help to Lanigan when he had first been assigned to the detective staff as a plain-clothes man.

Lanigan nodded as he stuffed the money into his pocket.

"It's about ten times as much coin as I ever had at one time in my life, Fingers," he frankly acknowledged.

"Well, pouch it, bo—pouch it!" earnestly recommended Fingers in his habitually repressed tone. "Don't ease it back to these bookie bums. You got a chunk o' real change fer yourself, see? Well, stick it into a crib and git a pass-book fer it, or, still better, slip it to the wife to take care of. They know how. Git me?"

"The wife will get the good of it, and what comes of it, you can hock your hat on that, Fingers," said Lanigan, with a grin.

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Then he made straight for the exit gate and left the track.

II

LANIGAN, who, outside the track, had telephoned to his wife to meet him at a first-rate restaurant, wore the fatuous expression of the unaccustomed winner, the too-quickly-assumed grand air of the plunger, when he found his wife in the restaurant's waiting-room. He had told her over the wire that he'd had "a little luck" that afternoon, which they might as well celebrate that evening by indulging in the large down-town "eats."

When they were installed at a corner table and the dinner order had been given, Lanigan, preenful over his talent as a "picker," looked her over a bit critically. She was a trig, pretty little woman in shirt-waist and skirt—whereas the other women at the tables of this pretentious restaurant were "dressed" for dinner. Lanigan, absorbed as he was in the contemplation of his wealth and his genius as a horse-player, noticed this.

"You didn't have time to doll up, eh?" he said to her, his gaze roving upon a sector of wonderfully arrayed women at near-by tables.

She spread out her hands, which were roughened from dishwashing, and laughed lightly enough.

"What with?" she asked him.

Lanigan suddenly became conscious that his question had been a mean one. Then he was suffused by a glow proceeding from the sense of his new wealth—and the greater wealth soon to be garnered. Clothes? Hats? All sorts of duds for the little woman? He would fix all that!

He had a sense of the dramatic, and he keenly enjoyed watching her amazed expression when, after telling her about the clash with the book-maker and the Bengal race, he produced the "bank-roll" and told her how much there was in it. A full minute passed before she could speak at all. Then she broke out delightedly:

"Why, Jim, we can make a fine big first payment on a farm with that, and get away from this horrible crazy city, as we've been wanting to for years—can't we?"

"We can—but we won't; not just yet, anyhow," he replied. "This wad is only a little hunk of bait. It's a shoe-string that I'm going to run into a tannery."

Horse-won money produces a kind of madness in the winner, and Lanigan's wife caught the glitter of this greedy dementia in his eye. But she succeeded in not looking depressed while, throughout the dinner, he talked grandiosely about how he intended to "run up" his winnings into some huge unstated sum.

"You see, kid," he expatiated over the coffee, "I've always been a piker since I've been playing 'em—had to be. If I'd ever had any real money to work with, I'd have connected long ago with a package. Well, I've got it now—and just you watch my smoke!"

"But, Jim," she put in quietly, "haven't you often told me that nobody can win at the race-track in the long run?"

"Oh, I meant that pikers couldn't win," he replied blithely. "But I'm out of the piking mob now, don't you see? Anyhow, I'm not going to try to beat 'em 'from the ground,' as they say—by bucking the books on races I don't know anything about, that is. I'm going to have an ace in the hole for every dollar of this wad that I lay out. There's framing going on all the time at the tracks, and now I'm in a position to do a little of that framing stuff myself, or at least be on the inside of it—so just you keep your eye on my wake when I get a-going!"

She remarked that twenty-one hundred dollars was a pretty tidy sum of itself, and that they'd been talking for so long about buying a farm, both of them having grown up on farms.

"Just forget the farm thing for the present," was his offhand reply to that. "We'll have farms a-plenty when we get around to that, don't worry." He leaned over the table with a more sober expression as he went on: "But the thing that I ought to do, if I had the sense I was born with, which I haven't, would be to buy this good horse Bengal and race him for purses and stakes. I was talking for a minute with the horse's fool of an owner after the race, and he has no idea of what a good horse he owns.

"He bet on another horse in the race to beat his own first-rate nag. He only entered Bengal, he told me, on the off chance, as he put it, that the horse might grab second or third money. He doesn't know that Bengal is a top notch handicap

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horse, and, when I told him I'd won two thousand on him, he said that he'd willingly sell the horse for two thousand. So, if I had any brains, I'd buy that horse and race him. It would be a swagger investment."

"Well, then, why don't you buy him?" she asked.

That, at any rate, she thought, would be better than betting his winnings away in driblets.

"Because," he answered, "I don't know enough. But, as a straight matter of fact, I can turn the roll over faster. Leave it to me! There are two or three little old things about this horse game that I've got a kind of a line on—watch me grow!"

From the restaurant they went to detective headquarters, where Lanigan was due to report. Lanigan was a favorite of Inspector Canfield, the chief of detectives, and their wives were on visiting terms. The chief, a chubby, gray-mustached man, nimbused by a Buddha-like tranquility, was alone in the office. He placed a chair for Mrs. Lanigan and then grinned quizzically at the detective-sergeant.

"I hear you won a bundle this afternoon at the track, Jim," he said.

"Ye-eh—picked up a little, Joe," replied Lanigan with the grandeur of modesty. "Who told you?"

"Neat little parcel, two thousand," said the chief, ignoring Lanigan's question. "It'll feel good in the bank, hey?"

"It'd get too moldy there, Joe," said Lanigan, patting the roll in his pocket. "I'd rather make it work."

"Work? At the tracks, you mean?"

"Well, yes—but cinched, you know, Joe; cinched like a traffic horse on parade, every time."

"Betting cinches, d'ye mean?" ironically inquired the chief.

"Well," sagely replied Lanigan, "ace-in-the-hole stuff—when you come pretty nigh knowing what's going to come off, I mean."

"So," the chief, after a chuckle, asked Lanigan, "you still think a man can *know* what's going to happen in a horse-race—after the years you've been on duty at the tracks?"

Lanigan looked a little nettled.

"Well, it's this way," he explained with a sort of fatuous earnestness. "Two thousand is a cute little roll, of course, but it isn't enough for what I want to do. I'm a hayseed, you remember. And so's the wife. We were both born and brought up in Orange County, farm kids. My folks live there, and so do hers. Well, the wife and I are rubes yet, and always will be; we'll never get that out of our systems, and we don't want to. We're both hankering all the time for a farm.

"There's a dandy farm up yonder near where our folks live—forty acres, where we could slosh around and raise all kinds of hogs and hens and the like—that I could buy for five thousand. Well, you see, don't you? I haven't got enough. So I've got to turn the two thousand over a couple of times. And," he added with an air of wisdom which he sought conscientiously to repress, "I think I'll know how to do that."

The chief, tapping his teeth with an ivory envelop-opener, listened with a reflective grin.

"And so, Jim," he said, "after the way you've seen men with fifty times your roll fairly crucified at the tracks, you still think you'll get your farm by 'turning over' your two thousand on the ponies—is that the idea?"

"Well, I'll know every time what kind of a frame-up I've got my coin down on—you can gamble on that, Joe," stubbornly replied Lanigan.

There was a short silence. Then—

"Ever have your head examined, Jim?" inquired the chief.

"Nope," sheepishly replied Lanigan.

"Never fell out of your cradle on your bean, or out of a tree, or anything like that, when you were a kid, did you?"

"Nope."

"Jim was saying at dinner," Mrs. Lanigan put in, "that the sensible thing for him to do would be to buy that Bengal horse, and race him—that he could buy the horse for two thousand dollars."

The chief looked interested.

"Well," he said after a cogitating pause, "if he's *got* to slough off his package on the ponies, why, of course, it would be better for him to own a horse. That way, when he comes to, he'll have something to look at, anyhow, even if the horse is only fit for glue."

"Bengal's a good nag, all right, but I can do better with the wad than buying him," was Lanigan's comment, as he rose to go.

After their departure, the chief of detectives leaned back in his swivel chair,

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with his feet on his desk, for a long time, tap-tapping on his teeth with the ivory envelop-opener.

III

THE next morning, pretty early for him, Lanigan, awaking to the glorious consciousness of riches, bounded out of bed, eager to begin a new and potential day. The horse-mad glitter burned brightly in his eyes. He laughed aloud when he remembered his chief's croakings. The thing could be done, and he was the boy to do it! At the breakfast-table he peeled a one-hundred-dollar bill from his roll to hand to his wife wherewith to pay the domestic bills and provide herself with "a few little things."

Then he remembered that he had broken one of his one-hundred-dollar bills in paying the four-dollar check for the restaurant dinner. He had the ninety-six dollars in change from the broken bill in a separate roll in the other trousers pocket. He must keep his two thousand winnings intact—they all have that idea! So he gave his wife ninety dollars, holding out the remaining six of the ninety-six for his expenses for the day.

A lot of horses were flying around the course at their morning gallops when he reached the track at eleven in the forenoon. He found the man he was looking for in the paddock. He was a scrubby-bearded, beady-eyed wisp of a man with a twisted mouth, caused by the kick of a horse. Lanigan knew him for a crooked owner who had been twice ruled off the turf for racing an in-and-out string.

He had only recently been restored to standing after having been kept off the tracks for two years by the turf authorities. Lanigan, in searching out this shady horseman, felt himself growing warm from the toes up with the shame of it. But the suffusion of heat did not deter him from going through with his purpose.

"Hello, Lanigan," greeted Pilcher, the crooked owner, out of his twisted mouth. "Out early, eh?"

"I came out to have a little buzz with you," replied Lanigan.

He knew he could go straight to the point with this man.

"With me?" said Pilcher, obviously puzzled.

"You've got Tulip in the third race today, I see," said Lanigan.

The shady owner nodded, chewing a straw and darting stealthy glances at the detective-sergeant out of the tail of his eye.

"And Rifleman is in that race," said Lanigan.

"So I notice," said Pilcher, waiting.

"The other seven horses in the sprint are the worse gang of mutts at the track," went on Lanigan. "It's the foolishest race I ever saw on an entry card."

"It's li'ble to be just as foolish on the track," said Pilcher.

"Meaning, of course, that it's just a two-horse race?" said Lanigan.

"What else?" replied Pilcher.

"That's the dope, of course," said Lanigan. "Either Tulip or Rifleman could fall down and win. They could spread-eagle the other seven by a sixteenth of a mile. Tulip, your horse, will be the even-money favorite. Rifleman will be the two to one second choice. The rest will be at write-your-own-ticket prices. Well, we've got a chance to do a little business on that race, haven't we?"

"I'm a-listenin', son," tersely replied Pilcher.

"There's no reason why your horse Tulip has got to win today—eh?" said Lanigan.

"No partic'lar reason, except that I need the purse," was Pilcher's laconic reply.

"All right," said Lanigan. "Let's hand the race to Rifleman. I've got two thousand to bet on Rifleman. When Rifleman wins—and he can't lose with your horse Tulip taken care of—I'll cut the rake-down on Rifleman fifty-fifty with you."

"Two thousand to bet, eh?" said Pilcher. "Show me, son."

Lanigan displayed his winnings, counting the roll over to show the turf crook that it was all there.

"That's good enough," pronounced Pilcher, and he held out his claw-like hand.

Lanigan found himself getting warm again from the soles up when he accepted that hand. But he could not ignore the extended hand of the man with whom he was negotiating a crooked trick.

"Tulip won't win," Pilcher added sententiously.

"Are you dead sure Rifleman is out to win?" asked Lanigan.

"Sure as I'm wearing a hat," declared Pilcher. "Bill Halsey, Rifleman's owner,

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is out to win everything he can get. He couldn't be got to by a man with a giraffe's neck. That's the kind of fool owner Bill is."

"You can trust your jockey to take care of Tulip, I suppose?" said Lanigan, whereupon Pilcher grinned hideously with his twisted mouth.

"Son," replied the shady owner, "that ridin' boy of mine is all arms and no conscience. I'd hate to tell you how many hawsses he's taken care of thataway for me."

So the pact was made. Lanigan, strolling from the paddock to a roadhouse across the way from the track for lunch, marveled at himself. He had never supposed that he could be capable of participating in such a downright crooked transaction. But, when his conscience began to stab him, his "More" madness enabled him to find self-condonation.

"They're all getting it that way, so why shouldn't I?" was his conscience-appeasing argument. "There's not a money man in the racing game that hasn't had to smirch himself to get it. It's a dirty game, anyhow, and they all play it with sooty tools. Why should I be a trailer, now that I've got my chance?"

After lunch, in order to kill time until the track gates should be opened, Lanigan strolled into a grove of trees extending from the rear of the roadhouse to a road about three hundred yards away. When he neared the road, Lanigan sat down on a rustic bench encircling a tree, pulled his hat over his eyes, and began another little argument with his conscience, which despite his sophistries, still was smarting.

He had fallen into a half-doze when he heard the crackling of twigs behind him. He turned his head sleepily to see who was coming up back of the tree. Two men, their faces covered by handkerchiefs to their eyes, faced him. One of them was covering Lanigan's head with an automatic pistol while the other kept a similar weapon steadily leveled at the detective-sergeant's stomach.

"Up with your mitts, bo," resolutely suggested one of the men.

Lanigan's hands went up.

From behind the tree a third man appeared, his face also swaddled in a handkerchief. With great deliberation this one walked behind Lanigan and thrust his hand into the plain-clothes man's big-money pocket as familiarly as if the pocket had been his own. He brought the two-thousand-dollar package out of the pocket with easy deftness, stripped the rubber band from it, moistened a thumb, counted the bills, and then observed in a sort of bored tone to the two immobile gun-holders:

"All right. I got it."

Then he patted Lanigan's rear pockets to find the detective-sergeant's "gat." He took the pistol from the right-hand pocket, then sped swiftly among the trees to the road, where there was an automobile waiting. He leaped into the car and shot it along the road closer to the bench. The two men with the guns, continuing to cover Lanigan, backed away from him.

"Be nice, now, pal," said one of them to Lanigan, "and don't do no squeakin' till we get down the road a piece. Then you can holler yer head off."

Lanigan, dazed as if he had been literally sand-bagged, sat back on the bench and watched the car shoot down the road.

"And I smeared myself for this!" he groaned aloud.

He had no thought of reporting the hold-up—he could make no such a laughing-stock of himself! How his mates of the Police Department would jeer if they could know how, with the bit of "business" he had in hand, he had been "frisked for his roll!" How they would cackle over the "frisking" itself, even without knowledge of what he had intended to do with the money!

"The only thing I've got left is the gameness to take my medicine, and I'll do that, even if I have made a crook of myself," was his final summing up of the situation.

He sat, stunned and miserable, on the bench until three o'clock. Then he crossed over to the track. He would see how the third race came out, anyhow.

There was a long delay at the barrier. When the field got away, Rifleman, the horse Lanigan would have bet his two thousand on, was left flatfootedly and hopelessly at the post. This put it up to the jockey riding Tulip, Pilcher's horse.

The jockey knew that, with Rifleman left at the webbing, Tulip would now have to win, though he of course had intended, as per orders, until Rifleman had been left standing stock-still, to "take care of"

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Tulip. Now, with no other decent horse in the race to make him run, Tulip, the even-money favorite, would have to win, or be ruled off the turf for life, with his jockey and owner. So Tulip's jockey brought the favorite along about his business and the horse won, cantering, by ten lengths.

"And so," breathed Lanigan to himself, standing in the paddock and watching the race, "I'd have dropped my two thousand anyhow, even if I hadn't been stuck up for it. I'm the great little gambler!" He groaned aloud as he added: "And I only gave her ninety bucks—and she is still wearing that blamed old rain-warped Winter hat!"

Hating to face her, he delayed going home until late that night. When, finally, he rushed home and blurted out the story, she took it with her unfailing cheerfulness.

"The thing for me to have done," he said miserably, "was to have bought that horse Bengal this morning. Then I'd have had something."

"Try and forget all about it," she said assuagingly. "It's all a part of life. I'm sorry you didn't get home earlier. Mrs. Canfield, the chief's wife, called, and we had a very nice evening."

"I hate to face the chief in the morning," said Lanigan to that. "I'll tell him how I was nicked—but you can bet I'll tell nobody else."

"LAY off the kidding, if you've got that in your head, Joe," said Lanigan to Inspector Canfield when he reported the next morning and told his chief in confidence what had happened. "I'm trimmed, and trimmed right. I'm through with the horses. Give me another detail, will you? I never want to see a race-track again."

The chief gave Lanigan a down-town detail, and the detective-sergeant, sore to the marrow, doggedly went at the task of curing himself of the "horse bug," a harder insect to quell than the hookworm.

IV

LANIGAN'S convalescence from the horse-betting mania was slow. It would have been more rapid had he been able to force himself not to read the race-track news—particularly the results. But every day, for months on end, he read, with a feeling of profound gloom, of a win by some horse or other at a long price that he knew he would surely have backed had he been at the track.

It caused him particular anguish of spirit to read of the brilliant doings of the horse Bengal. Bengal went right along, through Summer and Fall, winning stakes and purses. Bengal grabbed four out of five of his races, bringing the money home even under the most crushing weights imposed upon him by the handicapper.

The horse had changed hands, Lanigan noticed in reading of Bengal's string of victories. Some fathead, he reflected, had bought the horse, and now was reaping the reward that should have been his own had he possessed, in his brief hour of prosperity, the sense to purchase the thoroughbred when his owner had virtually chucked the animal at his head.

Lanigan made it his gloomy business to keep track of the amount in stakes and purses which Bengal kept right on winning well into the Autumn. He knew that he was needlessly punishing himself in doing this. But he couldn't help doing it.

Two weeks before Thanksgiving, Lanigan's wife went on a visit to her people on the old farm up in Orange County, where his own people also lived. She was to remain there over the holiday, and Lanigan arranged to join her on the day before Thanksgiving, to have the turkey dinner with the home folks. She looked pretty good to him when the train drew into the little village station and he saw her standing in the brilliant November sunshine.

"Supposing we take a stroll through the funny old Zeke village?" he suggested to her after the greeting.

"Wouldn't you rather ride?" she asked.

He noticed that her eyes were unusually bright and that there was a lot of warm color in her cheeks. She seemed, too, to be striving to repress a certain excitement which was foreign to her usual tranquil manner.

"Ride in what?" he asked her.

She stepped out ahead of him, leading the way across the street from the station to a good-looking new motor-car drawn up at the curb.

"Get in, Jim," she said to him.

He stared at her.

"Who's going to run the thing?" he asked.

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"I am," she replied. "Get in, won't you? We've got a lot of things to attend to."

He got in. She swung herself nimbly into the driving seat beside him, started the car, and they shot down the road. Lanigan rubbed his eyes.

"Look here, kid," he asked her, "where the dickens did you learn how to drive a car?"

"Oh, I've been driving for a couple of weeks now—ever since I came up home," she replied airily, smiling. "It isn't hard to drive—just a little knack."

"But whose car is it?" he asked her.

"Ours, of course!" she answered, laughing outright.

"Ours!"

"Yes, ours. Hush, now, please. No more questions. They take my mind off driving. I'll tell you about it later on."

Lanigan, stupefied, kept still. She stopped the car in front of a neat farmhouse about three miles from the station. Lanigan rubbed his eyes again. It was the forty-acre farm that both his wife and himself had hankered for years to possess.

"Let's go in," she suggested. "It's vacant. The Talbots moved last week—gone to British Columbia. There's a nice grate fire burning in the front room. I built the fire myself this morning, so as to make it cozy-looking when you came."

Lanigan, agape and speechless, permitted himself to be conducted along the gravel path, up the steps of the wide porch, to the farmhouse door, which his wife opened with a key which she produced from her pocketbook. Presently they were sitting before the cheerful blaze of the crackling logs in the grate.

"Ours, Jim—the whole thing," she said, waving a comprehensive hand around. "Ours to 'slosh around on,' as you used to say, and raise pigs and chickens and——"

Lanigan suddenly found his voice. Also, he found his arms, and he grabbed her. But he could not hold her very tight, for she needed room to dab at her eyes with a little wad of a handkerchief.

"Let me in on a little bit of this, anyhow, won't you?" Lanigan said to her, pretty hoarse himself. "What's the idea? What's it all about? Am I smoking hop, or just plain bughouse?"

"Oh, it's nothing," she said, fighting back little sobs that were besetting her, "except that I've bought the farm, and the car, and a whole lot of things—and we've got whole heaps of money left besides!"

"Oh, we have, have we?" gasped Lanigan, floundering hopelessly. "Why, girl, you talk about money like as if it was pulled out of a lake."

"Well, it did come awful easy, that's true," she acknowledged.

"Easy!" he exclaimed. "What did you do—just reach up in the air and get it?"

"I didn't have to do anything for it, Jim," she said. "All I had to do was to sit still and have the money brought to me—the money that Bengal won for us."

"Bengal!"

"Yes. Bengal is my—our—horse, you know. I bought him on the day after you had your misfortune at the track—at least, Chief Canfield had him bought for me."

"Canfield!" broke out Lanigan. "Why, what did he have to——"

"Well, you see, Jim," she interrupted him, "it was Chief Canfield who arranged to have you robbed of your two thousand dollars. And the man who took the money from you carried it right down to the chief. And the next day, knowing how bent you were on owning Bengal, why, the chief had him bought in my name—and Bengal, the dear, cute old thing, did the rest!"

LANIGAN, on a short visit to the city from the farm a year later, met Fingers Fraley on the street.

"I hated to stick you up that way, bo," said Fingers, apologetically, after they had exchanged greetings. "But I knowed you'd ha' sloughed the roll on the ponies anyhow, and when the chief rung me up and ast me to accommodate him by nickin' you for the roll, I figgered that it 'ud be for your good, and so I done it."

"Do it again for me, Fingers, if you ever happen to see me hit town with a little bundle on me," said Lanigan. "I'll go fifty-fifty with you the next time you stick me up. There's worse ways than that of saving money."

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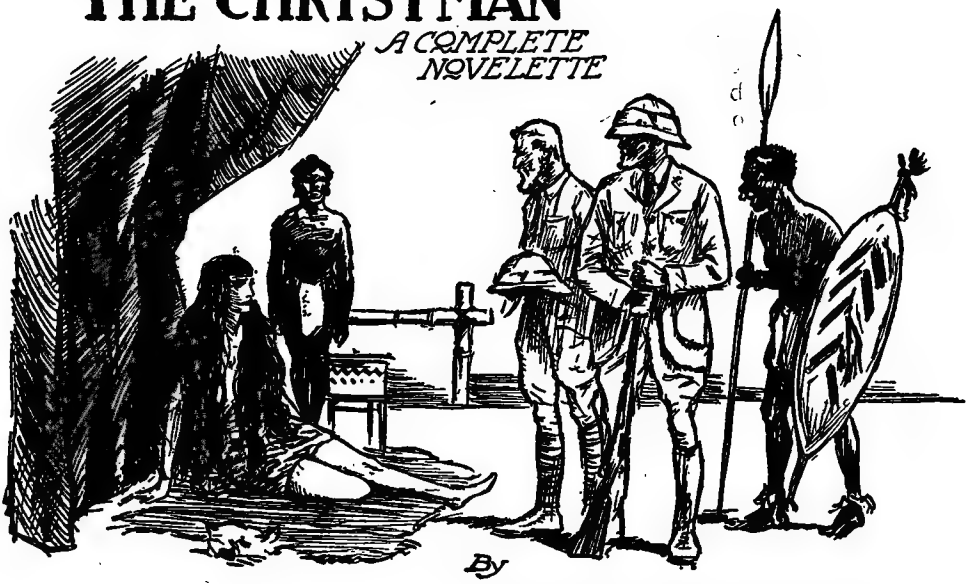
THE CHRISTMAN

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE



By CHARLES BEADLE

BY CHANCE meetings are made adventures, as any lover knows. Newman Sturge's arrival in Buluwayo, via Mombassa, had been heralded by his having taken the precaution to be officially missing for six months; with the result that the American explorer was fêted in a mild way: the feminine portion of Buluwayo society only too glad to find an excuse for social excitement, and the men, whose lives were spent in the wilds and therefore in no danger of mistaking a sound husky for a roaring lion, glad to hand a welcome to a good sportsman.

Any man after wandering for two years in Central Africa is apt to be beguiled by the soft caresses of civilization; they seem good—at first. Newman had intended to catch the monthly boat from Cape Town. Yet he stayed on. He began to wonder why.

Then one hot afternoon while lounging on the club veranda staring at the white dust devils, pawing perplexedly at his torpedo beard of flaxen yellow as he pondered on the realization that he was too old or too young—he could not decide which—to give up a life of vagabondage, a tall slender man, clad in a walnut beard and gray flannels, alighted from a rickshaw in company with Major Fenton, the Magistrate.

As Newman shook hands he was conscious of dislike and surprise; dislike at the soft touch and surprise at the wiry grip—and in some other way Mr. Paul Miêville's manner aroused resentment. Over the inevitable stinger Major Fenton remarked that Miêville was a stranger to this part of Africa and intended going north to see the country. Newman fidgeted, expecting to be pumped for information; but Miêville adroitly led the conversation to local topics, leaving him vaguely disappointed.

Naturally in such a small community Newman met Miêville at lunches and dinners; and became slightly irritated at the man's easy loquacity—and rather interested in his stories of adventures in Africa, west and north, pest-infected rivers and lost Inca cities. One night at a dinner at Government House Newman announced that he would leave that week for New York, and immediately became depressed. Toward midnight he made his adieu. But the packed luggage in his room depressed him still more. He fled to the cool of the veranda.

The lights of the Great White Way, the charm of the dinners, fine wines and pretty women, seemed to have lost all attraction as he gazed at the great African moon rising, like some monstrous glass balloon,

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above the hairy ridge of the horizon; that tempting horizon beyond which lay the mystery of the unknown.

As silently as a Chinaman, Miêville appeared and sank into a chair beside him. For a while neither spoke, for which Newman was grateful. Then from Miêville, gently, as one thinking aloud:

"I wonder what she sees tonight, our friend the moon? Black deeds and bloody, or just an orchid bathing in the blue shadows of the veldt?"

Newman glanced across at Miêville, whose eyes in the glint of the moon were blue against the silver of his shirt front.

"Have a drink?"

Miêville accepted and pressed a button on the veranda post with one foot. They smoked in silence. The soft jingle and the patter of bare feet from a belated rickshaw suggested an ethereal motif against the chorus of the frogs and the throb of distant drums.

"You must have had an interesting trip," suggested Miêville lazily after the drinks had arrived.

"Yes," agreed Newman.

"Did you find any cases of cannibalism in the Tanganyika country?" persisted Miêville gently.

"No. But there are in the Congo."

"Interesting. In Angola they have a crucifixion, they say, although I've never seen one."

"A crucifixion!" exclaimed Newman, putting down his glass. "I've never heard of it in Africa except among the Arabs in the north."

"It's probably a relic of Christianity. About two hundred years ago the Church of Rome established missions on the coast of Angola. They prospered, I believe, and penetrated as far as what is now known as the Congo border; but, as you know, they were finally exterminated in the interior. The bizarre fact is that in many villages today is to be found a crucifix, worshiped as a great *ju-ju*, to which, so they say, are sacrificed their human captives; following, I suppose, a garbled pantomimic version of the story of Calvary. It seems a traveler's yarn to most people, but fortunately I secured a curio which lends some color to the story. I wonder whether you would care to see it?"

"Indeed I should!"

"If you did not know so much about African lore and the romantic possibilities, I should be rather chary of showing it to you. However, come along into the light."

NEWMAN rose, conscious of a thrill of excitement. In the bedroom off the club veranda Miêville drew from a trunk and handed to Newman a crucifix of hardwood, silver inlaid. As Newman examined the figure of the Christ in cracked and yellow ivory he glanced swiftly up at the face of Miêville in shadow.

"I did not notice—forgive me," remarked Mievville, taking the crucifix, "until I was showing it to some friends in New York—skeptical, by the way—that the grain of the wood at the base of the stem was horizontal as well as perpendicular, which—" picking with a slender finger—"revealed a wooden cork stopping a hole roughly hollowed out."

A small, yellow roll fell into his hand. Smoothing out the morsel of ragged silk, Newman saw a number of faint lines and faded writing.

"What is it?" Newman demanded after a futile examination. "It looks like a plan of some sort. A rough square is all I can trace; but what are the words?"

"It is a plan and the words are:

'Sicut patribus; sit Deus nobis.'"

"But a plan of what?"

"Ah, that was the problem." Miêville sat on the bed, twisting his arm 'round the bedstead head. "By whom were the words written and why? *'Sicut patribus, sit Deus nobis!'* Obviously by a monk. Why? Remember the story of the annihilation of the monasteries. I did not consider it farfetched to figure on the fact, considering all probabilities, that the words were written in a moment of emotional distress.

"Very good. The rough square on the plan with compass pointer—which you can only see with a microscope, so faint they are—is obviously a monastery and the tiny cross in the northeast corner is where something is hidden. But what? What would a monk hide? Books? Vestments? More probably jewels."

"But had they any jewels—upcountry there?"

"I think so. They were a very wealthy order and as you know psychologically, avarice is a very human vice and is often

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expressed in terms of religion by an inordinate worship of jewels." Newman nodded. "Can you not imagine the monks in that far-off monastery surrounded by howling savages realizing that the end, that martyrdom, was at hand?

"They would be probably cut off from water, if not food. Consider the probable state of their minds. Imagine one, possibly the curator of the altar jewels, urged by his love for those emblems set in adoration of his God, obsessed by the certitude that they would fall into sacrilegious hands —to be put to witness he dared not visualize what horrible purposes—urged by that dominant impulse, deciding that the jewels *must* be hidden—perhaps still buoyed by the hope of escape and recovering them afterward—and swiftly seeking for the safest manner in which to preserve the secret?

"What better place than the crucifix about his neck? If he were taken the savages would not destroy that; he knew their psychology enough to be sure that they would regard it as a *ju-ju*—that they would never dream of searching within the stem—and if they did they would not understand what it was. Should any good Christian, he would have argued, attain possession of the plan he would hold it incumbent to find and return those sacred jewels to the Mother Church.

"Imagine him hurriedly boring this hole in the stem—perhaps disturbed by some untoward happening—hastily tearing off a piece of the nearest article which would serve the purpose of resisting time and fitting in this tiny hole in the crucifix, his alb, the altar-cloth, this piece of yellow silk; then after performing his last duty, joining in the prayers of the brothers, intoning joyfully the Gregorian chant, triumphing over the shrieks and yells of the savages without and the persistent, menacing throb of the drums of doom."

Miêville ceased on a low note which seemed echoed affirmatively by the pulse of those distant drums. Newman still stood with the morsel of dingy silk in one hand and the crucifix in the other, watching those soft brown eyes regarding him gently. Then with an effort, as if breaking something tangible he began—

"But what facts——"

"As for facts," interrupted Miêville quietly, "I have seen one sapphire of price in the hands of a Portuguese on the coast, the same man from whom I—I bought this curio, which he obtained from a native. Current rumor speaks of chiefs wearing stones of value jumbled up with the usual cowrie shells and can-openers."

"But it would be utterly impossible to locate this kraal," objected Newman glancing at the plan.

"No, I think not. The name is marked and——"

"Oh, but no village. How long ago was this massacre, do you think? A century or more? By this time it would have been overgrown by the jungle and forgotten long ago."

"Perhaps. But remember monasteries were not numerous—not on every hill, as in Spain. I have gotten a book which gives, I believe, a fairly accurate account of these Roman Catholic missions and also the sites of the monasteries, which confirms, by the way, the presence of jewels. Also do not forget that superstition never dies; it changes form.

"These savages have merely changed the symbol from a tree or a crocodile to the crucifix. Have you remarked that it is only on the West Coast of Africa that we get any form of attempt at graven images? And the West Coast was the first field of a purely negroid race to be proselytized. I should not be surprised if it were possible to prove that these images are derived by imitation from the Christ upon the Cross. I am inclined to think that this persistence of legendary superstition will have preserved the site of this monastery, and quite possibly the village—or a village on the same spot."

"That's so," agreed Newman thoughtfully.

"And if you'll examine the plan with the glass you'll observe that a river is indicated —probably the monk was too rattled to give the name—beside the monastery."

Miêville rose casually and leaned against the lintel of the door, gazing out at the moonlight night while Newman scrutinized the plan with the glass.

"Would you," came Miêville's voice softly, "care to come?"

"ME? GEE!" Newman stood up abruptly and stared at the back of Miêville's head. "But I'm leaving for the States to-morrow—still—" He glanced at the crucifix lying on the bed.

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"It's very interesting. But why do you come up this way to get to Angola?"

Miêville went over to a drawer and produced a map.

"To go in from the coast is three months' trip overland, as the village is in the southeast corner near the Congo border: in fact, the river, I suspect, is a tributary of the Kabompo, which flows, as you must know, into the Zambesi. We have the rail now to the Victoria Falls and then canoe, probably all the way, which reduces the expense of portage to less than one-tenth of the other route."

"Quite correct."

Miêville returned to the door.

"I should like to have you come. For one thing I don't speak the patois here. I believe you do. If you feel interested let me know and I'll state terms."

Newman drew a cigar from his pocket and bit off the end.

"What are they?"

"Simple. You pay all expenses and we halve the proceeds, if any. I promise nothing."

Newman felt slightly irritated at the unresponsiveness of the back of Miêville's head.

"Quite so. But we should require a strongly armed caravan; hence great expense."

"On the contrary. War is crude. Anyway we could not fight a whole tribe unless we wish to colonize in the British fashion. We shall have to use diplomacy which is not expensive, except to the others."

Leaning on the table Newman stared fixedly at the wash-stand. A stray mosquito hummed about his head. The fact of Miêville's need for money rather surprised him; he had the air of easy affluence. Still, that was easy to understand.

He liked the direct simplicity of the proposition: and the take-it-or-be-damned attitude appealed to him. A man of such a character should make a good partner. And the adventure was tempting; it would not matter if they never found the jewels. Yet there were the home people and the company of women, white and clothed. Africa would never let him go for good; some day he would have to answer the call again, so why not now? Out there beyond in the moonlight . . . Was it imagination or were the drums beating faster?

"Well, I'll think it over," he began cautiously, but Miêville had retired to the veranda chair.

II

"MAN is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward," said some sage, and surely he loves his fate, for the masculine animal is never so happy as when he sees a fine pyrotechnic display not far ahead.

In writing to his doting mother and sisters that an ethnological problem of extreme importance delayed his departure from Africa indefinitely, Newman lied abominably.

A fortnight sufficed to get together the caravan, which included two trustworthy Matabele servants. They traveled by rail to the Victoria Falls and for two months on foot and canoe up the Zambesi, following a tributary, the Kabompo. Eventually they came to a more sluggish river in a flatter country where lay the village of one Sepopa, a reputed sultan of the north, which from their guide's description, might prove to be the site of the monastery.

So it came about that one morning Newman awoke with the sense of drama about to begin. Would they find the jewels, or even the strange land of the crucifix? He looked at his companion smoking under the mosquito net. Newman had never met the equal of Miêville as a hunting partner: those long slender legs seemed tireless; he never lost his nerve, and had gained the native name, "Monepi"—the straight shot—arousing a faint sense of displeasure in Newman's own name, "Amethlokadi"—eyes-like-the-sky.

Also Miêville handled men well, although Newman had often been puzzled by the knowledge that they did not like him; and socially he was perfect, his stories and his guitar had so often turned the monotony of the river trip into a pleasant picnic.

"Ugh!" yawned Newman, sitting up. "What time is it? —— the skeeters!"

"Three of the clock and a fine moonlight night," replied Miêville. "She's been up about an hour."

They sat around a huge wood fire upon a wooded islet drinking coffee and eating biscuits while the men struck camp and packed the canoes. In a neighboring pool a school of hippopotami had disported all night with many grunts and splashes, sometimes crashing among the reeds and trees,

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but never approaching near the fires. The wooded banks cast mystic shadows upon the silvered waters from which the canoe glided ghostlike, the moonbeams glistening on the paddles and half-nude figures, one in each bow and five in the stern. In the wake of the leaders followed two more spectral boats—the baggage canoes.

Miêville's voice richocheted across the water in an Italian love-song to the accompaniment of the thrumming guitar and the rhythmic swish. Now and again the splash of an otter or water-rat or a wild call of forest life, echoed across; or very occasionally the snort of a playful hippo brought guttural remarks and put the beat of the paddles out of measure with the song. From the distance came a moaning lament. An owl hooted with melancholy persistence. The crash of undergrowth sounded as some leviathan moved upon the bank.

"As it was in the beginning—" muttered Newman.

Gambai, the head paddler, squatting down for a spell, asked for a cigaret. The flare of the match lit up a carven face of mahogany, inset soft cunning eyes; the cupped hands smoking in the native manner, glowed from within like a bronze incense vase.

A loud splash from the shadows of the bank was followed by a piteous half-human cry. A floating object, gleaming wet in the dawnlight warring with the moon, jumped into life and disappeared with a flash of small eyes and the swish of a huge tail. From a long distance came a slight vibration. Newman looked across at Miêville, whose canoe was traveling level. Miêville ceased to thrum his guitar.

"Drums? Probably Sepopa's."

"Sure," agreed Newman. "But away off."

Tiring of the canoe cramp, they took to the open flats to walk with their guns, immune by surfeit from the hunter's desire to hit the trail of big game. Indeed the pookoo, a species of small waterbuck, was in herds so dense that they resembled a sheep ranch. But the glimpse of a forest of horns moving above the line of elephant grass proved too great a temptation to be resisted. A bull eland fell to Newman which necessitated a halt while the men excitedly overloaded the canoes.

The throb of the drums became more distinct, sending a thrill of expectancy. They discussed the probabilities through Gambai, with the Mamboë guide, a gnarled man whose nostrils were decayed with excessive snuff-taking.

On every occasion the men's statements, after the irritating native manner, differed in detail, but the substance remained in effect that Sepopa was an unusually powerful chief and that his village was reputed to be the home of a *ju-ju* of indescribable power by virtue of which they raided and enslaved with impunity to the north and east; that they were said to be cannibals.

Gambai, as a member of a dominating race, the Barotse, was inclined to discount the excited assurances and evident fear expressed by this skinny representative of a subject people, grunting contempt at every translation. Newman, who spoke fair Sesuto, the language from which Serotse is derived, tried hard to discover whether there was any tangible account of the form of the *ju-ju*. He did not dare to suggest a crucifix knowing that should he do so the native mind, timid and ever wishing to please the powerful white, would instantly echo the idea or thing implied.

A START was made again at eleven, but contrary to the statement of the guide—Newman remembered that he had put the question in the form of: "There are no more rapids between here and Sepopa's?"—a half-mile of rapids necessitated unloading the canoes, portage 'round through forest and undergrowth and reloading at the other side.

The shadows were slanting wide when rounding a sharp elbow they came upon a large stockaded village on the river edge. Newman halted his canoe until Miêville came abreast to discuss whether it would not be better to return half a mile to camp for the night, and to make the entry in the morning; but a decision was forced by a fisherman in a small canoe giving the cry of warning, a falsetto-made tremolo, by smacking the lips lightly with the fingers.

As they approached the bank at which a flotilla of war canoes with their high prows and a swarm of ordinary craft were moored, a mob of warriors, spears in hand, clad in skin loin-cloths, each man's hair combed and oiled into a conical mass a foot above the skull, came scurrying down from the stockade.

Gambai, dropping his paddle, squatted

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down in the bow and made the Barotse salutation, clapping the hands as the body made rhythmic bows. As the canoes swayed irresolutely at the will of their paddlers a few yards from the bank a tall man, lighter in color than the bronze of his fellows, and wearing a leopard skin with a quantitity of ivory bangles on his limbs, advanced beyond the mass of threatening warriors and cried out in a loud voice.

The trembling Mamboë guide replied, bumping his head with ludicrous energy upon the side of the canoe, as the young chief made a gesture which caused tufts of spears to glint menacingly in the setting sun, and Newman and Miêville to grip their rifles under cover of their litangas.

Gambai rose with a superbly contemptuous movement. Balancing exquisitely on the very prow of Newman's canoe and raising his paddle on high, he chanted in a clear tenor. Instantly the leopard-clad man threw up his spear and replied in the same key. Raising his paddle anew, Gambai gave a great cry of "*Yo-o-o!*" his shoulders sweeping downward to the "*sho-o-o!*", of the Barotse royal salute. Then squatting calmly, he gave a guttural order for the canoes to advance.

The man of the ivory bangles was Sepopa's favorite son, and by the numerous scars upon his lithe body, a great warrior. He received the white men in dignified silence. Gambai interpreted, saying that the two great white chiefs had deigned to visit the country of Sepopa. The young chief replied gravely that he, Mateka, the son of the Black Elephant, would receive the presents and bring the words of his father.

"Give him a bale of spotted baſts," said Newman to Jaha, the head Matabeſe. "That's quite enough to begin with."

But when the cotton print was duly laid at the feet of Mateka he professed great indignation. Were they eaters of fish—a term of opprobrium applied to the Marotse? Gambai replied volubly. A noisy and apparently violent altercation ensued, Mateka casting off his dignity as easily as a woman at a bargain sale. However, a compromise was arrived at in the usual manner and a place being indicated for the camp, Mateka departed with the grin of a happy child, carrying off an extra present of a sheath-knife.

But later, as the camp was being pitched with the aid of hurricane lamps, orange against the moonlight, Mateka returned demanding the instant presence of the white men before his father, Sepopa, for the Black Elephant was sick with a grievous disease.

"No," said Newman to Miêville, "I'm —— if we go! We've got to stand on our royal dignity, too. Gambai, tell the Black Elephant that we are tired and would rest. Tomorrow will we bring good medicine for the Morena."

At first Mateka refused to accept the message; but finally he went, scowling. At about five in the morning arrived a messenger bringing two skinny goats, some fowls and eggs and a further summons to the chief.

"Go to the devil!" exclaimed Newman when they waked him. Miêville smiled dreamily behind his mosquito net as he dozed off to sleep. At eight an angry discussion aroused them again.

"Oh, —— it," said Newman, "I suppose we'll have to go. They'll never let us rest until we do. Umzilo!"

AFTER running the gantlet of inspection of men, women, children, mangy curs and half-starved goats around the village, they arrived at an inner stockade with the usual ornamentation of a dried skull or two stuck upon the poles of the palisading.

Inside was a square mud hut inclosed by a fence, the thatched roof carried on to form a veranda where, upon a pile of skins, reclined a gorbellied, pock-marked man, his ivory bangles embedded in the flesh of his enormous limbs. Behind him, wielding an ivory-handled switch, crouched a young maiden. Mateka, who had joined them in the village, saluted by laying the palm of his hand upon his forehead and spoke rapidly to the chief, who merely grunted in reply.

"He says," interpreted Mateka in broken Serotse, "that he is pleased to see you. He is sick. Give him medicine."

"Excellent!" chuckled Miêville. "I like a man who knows what he wants. Fever, I should say," eying the flabby underlip and the hollow eye-sockets.

"He says that sleep has not come to him for many days and that he can not eat."

"Eaten too much, I guess," observed Newman viewing the vast paunch. "Insomnia from indigestion probably. Tell him we'll send him good medicine."

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At that moment a girl attired in the royal leopard skins entered the stockade, a retinue of Mamboë slaves following her. Tall, symmetrical, her coal-black hair fell to her waist as she sank upon a stool under the veranda. Her maidens squatted around her.

"The daughter of the Morena, Gambai?" inquired Newman.

"Nay, Amethlokadi," he answered; "the Mogwai, chief's sister, ranking as chieftainess."

"Undoubtedly Arab descent," remarked Newman. "Did you see any Arab blood in Angola?"

"A little. Although there are many Arabs there—as Tippoo Tib of Stanley's days. This girl's one of the most beautiful I've ever seen," Miêville continued, eying her critically. "There isn't a woman in America who could touch her for plastic movement."

"No?" said Newman rather abruptly.

Two of the Barotse appeared at the entrance bearing bundles of calico, sugar, tobacco and a Winchester.

"Tell the Morena that we wish to present him with these trifles," commanded Newman.

Mateka picked up the rifle as though it were some filthy object, but reluctantly passed it to his father, who nodded and grunted rapidly.

"He says can you kill with the gun?" interpreted Gambai, grinning contemptuously.

Again a series of grunts, and the fat arm, clinking ivory, pointed through the gateway to a man mending a spear without.

"He tells you to kill that man."

"I'll be —— if I do!" exclaimed Newman, and Miêville smiled gently. "Tell him I don't kill people for amusement."

Sepopa scowled; Mateka laughed.

"The Morena says can not a man kill his goat if he so wish? That man is but the goat of the Black Elephant."

After an excited discussion a goat was sent for; and as it was driven through the gateway Newman placed a bullet behind the foreshoulder, which simple feat raised a chorus of approving "*oughs*."

"The Morena desires that you enter the house of the Black Elephant."

Mateka and another warrior aided the corpulent chief to his feet; and he rolled rather than walked into the interior. The house was oblong with a trestle roof, evidently copied from the mud palaces of the Southern chief, Lewanika, who had been taught by missionaries or, more probably, constructed by some native student of building during Emin Pasha's expedition. A row of large calabashes lined one wall. The white men were bidden to be seated on native stools beside the chief, who subsided upon a pile of skins upon a dais in the far corner.

"Sturge," remarked Miêville quietly, "look up there. I don't think we've come in vain."

Gleaming dully in the blue shadow was a large crucifix, silver inlaid. Newman got up to examine it. Sepopa grunted and the Mogwai, who was entering with her retinue, exclaimed. Newman sat down hurriedly as Miêville whispered:

"Better not. They don't seem to like it. Hello, what's fatty up to?"

Sepopa had clambered to his knees and was in the act of pressing his lips to the base of the crucifix while Mateka, the Mogwai, and the rest, kneeling, bowed to the ground in the same direction, producing a queer sense of embarrassment in Newman as he repelled the impulse to kneel with them. He glanced at Miêville, who was smiling softly. As these savages resumed their normal attitudes it seemed as if some presence had left the house—a sense of relief from tension which attends the rising of a congregation from prayer. Newman remained uncomfortable until Miêville restored the perspective by remarking:

"It would be interesting to know what idea they have in their minds when they worship. Ask them, Sturge?"

Mateka masked his face in that blank expression of utter stupidity characteristic of the native who does not wish to reply; but the Mogwai answered.

"This is the great *ngaka* of all the spirits of the Black Elephants."

"But how and when did it come here?"

"How and when did the river come here?"

As Newman translated to Miêville, whose Serotse was not enough to follow the conversation, Sepopa grunted rapidly to the Mogwai.

"Don't press any more," advised Miêville. "The old man's getting sore."

Sepopa, Mateka and the Mogwai carried on an energetic conversation. Mateka

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grew sulky. The Mogwai, who frequently glanced at Newman, became angry. The upshot was that Mateka announced that Black Elephant required the medicine. Newman opened the medicine-chest, closely watched by the whole crowd; and selecting a sleeping-draft and a purge, presented them to the Mogwai with explicit instructions.

They were accepted and solemnly taken charge of by a wizen-faced man with a lion-skin head-dress crowned with cock's feathers, whose vocation of medicine-man was evident from the look of supreme disdain, evoking a repetition of the command that half the white water was to be taken that night and the other half the following night. Then as Sepopa intimated by rolling over with his back to them that the interview was at an end, they departed.

III

IN THE lee of the smoke from a green wood fire they sat after dinner discussing the situation. So far so good. The illness of the chief was a lucky accident by which they should profit. Wisely, they had left the actual plan of campaign to be dictated by circumstances. They had to provide a plausible excuse to stay near the village should their belief that it was the site of the monastery be confirmed.

The most obvious source of wealth, from a native point of view, was ivory, but that would not give them an excuse to dig; no, gold it must be in spite of the danger of rousing the fears of Sepopa; for a native sultan has a lively knowledge based on the reports of the fate of other chiefs, that gold is a vice which attracts white men as the carcass of a goat attracts flies.

Newman was inclined to advocate the use of the crucifix, which hung around Miêville's neck, to impress Sepopa; but Miêville, perhaps with deeper psychology, argued that the knowledge might excite envy and lead to an active desire for possession.

At dawn Jaha aroused them with the news that Maruwi, the medicine-man, awaited them. Newman looked at Miêville and laughed, remarking that, as usual, trouble attended the philanthropist. Squatting by the fire, his wizened face masklike in the gray light, Maruwi saluted with the soft clapping of hands, his soft, bright eyes peering about like a cunning bird.

Maruwi had been instructed by the Mogwai, Gambai interpreted, to inform the white chiefs that the Black Elephant had slumbered since the setting of the sun. Good. The white men nodded solemnly. The Mogwai, sister of the Black Elephant, required the presence of the white men. Good. They would appear. The Black Elephant should awaken? No; not until the sun was midway. Marwui's eyes twinkled. He received a present of a sheath-knife and departed.

"That old devil's plotting trouble," remarked Newman, sitting down to his coffee and biscuits.

"He's probably added a bit of his own concoction and the mixture may possibly cause complications," agreed Miêville. "We should have given it ourselves. I fancy that the medical fraternity here doesn't observe professional etiquette. Now let's wander up and around the village and get our bearings. We'll call on the fair Mogwai as we return."

The village was huddled like a flock of brown sheep within a fence upon a slight eminence which formed an elbow of the river so that fully two-thirds were defended by a water approach. Within the first palisading, on the landward side, were cattle-pens and granaries made of hollowed ant-hills; beyond these some eight hundred huts clustered 'round an inner stockade wherein dwelt Mateka and the Mogwai with Sepopa and his score of wives in the center.

Behind the village was open ground of burned grass on sandy soil, dotted with ant-hills, across which a herd of small cattle with the curious hump on the withers moved slowly out to pasturage. Along the west bank the trees had been felled and the ground cultivated, the stumps looking like an army of advancing pigmies; on the other side of the village the forest surged up like a breaking wave to within a hundred yards of the river.

Across the river were a few more patches encircled in forest, some tilled and others left fallow in the native way to recuperate; but the cultivation of the soil was very haphazard, conducted by Mamboë slaves, for this virile tribe preferred to live on the proceeds of the chase and raids.

"The break in the forest there," decided

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Newman, indicating the east side of the village, "isn't natural, and there are no signs of tree-stumps standing. And that's curious. Notice that great tree standing alone, looking as if it were leading the army of the forest. We'd better go along there shooting this evening and investigate."

The Mogwai received them seated upon her stool of state beneath a wild fig-tree before a square hut built after the pattern of Sepopa's. An impressive barbaric figure she looked in her leopard skins, her slender limbs sheathed in ivory bangles which tinkled at each movement. The skins were fastened by strips of untanned hide decorated with beads, blue and white, sewn with gut; and in the mass of her hair, blue against the rose-bronze of her flesh, was stuck a large ivory comb carved in the crude form of an elephant, echoing the whites of her eyes and the gleaming teeth.

Behind her, wielding fly-switches made from eland tails and mounted on handles of ebony and ivory, stood two of her Mamboë girls, nude save for a flap of hide encrusted with white beads. Beside her gravely squatted Maruwi, his cock-feathers glinting green in the morning sun; and around her were grouped a circle of warriors in their lion-skins upon their haunches.

AS THE white men advanced with the two Matabele and Gambai as escort, the Mogwai beckoned with one hand and her women placed two stools in front of her, sending an errant hen cluttering to a hut-roof. The Mogwai regarded Newman and Miêville intently, her sloe eyes shifting sharply from one to the other without a muscle moving. For a full minute not a word was said. Newman waited, according to African etiquette, for her to begin. Then, suddenly looking at Newman, she smiled, a curious melting of the haughty savageness.

"Whence come ye, oh Amethlokadi?"

"From the country of the white man, three moons distant, oh Mogwai."

"What seek ye?"

"To see thy country, which is beautiful."

"Is not thy country beautiful?"

"Is the face of an old wife as beautiful as that of a young virgin?"

"The crocodile-bird cleans the teeth of the crocodile."

"Nay, but my heart is white."

"As white as thy flesh—for they say that all white men have two tongues?"

"They who say that, have poison in their blood."

"Oh Amethlokadi, thou art well named. Thy beard is like the setting sun upon the water."

Newman moved uncomfortably, thankful that Miêville did not speak Serotse fluently. He replied with an effort and a little to his own surprise—

"Thine eyes are like unto two storm-veiled moons."

The Mogwai smiled, never removing her eyes from him.

"A small bird flutters within thy breast?" Newman shifted uneasily. "And Monepi, what seeketh he?"

"Even as I. Is he not my brother?"

"But he hath blood in his smile, whereas thine is sweeter than honey."

"Thou seest a buck in a tree-stump, Oh Mogwai."

"Thou hast many handmaidens in thy country?"

"Nay, none have I."

"Indeed, thou hast two tongues!"

"Thou hast spoken."

In spite of his long experience with natives, or because of it, Newman was still sufficiently ingenuous to be offended against his will at being given the lie by this barbaric beauty, for the more he saw of her the more was he astonished at her regal beauty.

"From whence comest thou, oh Mogwai? These people are not thy people?"

"I am a daughter of the hills, from whence I came (the north)."

Newman regarded her curiously. What could she mean? Arabic, as they had at first surmised? He glanced at Miêville, who smiled and whispered:

"A half-breed. Look at her features. Missionaries are human." He smiled mockingly and added—"It's up to you, pardner!"

Newman frowned, conscious that the Mogwai was watching him quietly.

"The Black Elephant still sleepeth."

"Good."

"Thou art a great medicine-man?"

"We are."

"One of my dogs has a sore."

She spoke in the patois. One of the girls rose and came forward, exposing to Newman her thigh, on which was a suppurating sore arising from a neglected cut. He told

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her to come to the camp where he would dress the wound. The Mogwai seemed disappointed, as if she had expected to see the wound healed at his touch. Maruwi, who had watched the examination with disdainful eyes, said something to her.

"When should the Black Elephant awake?" she asked sharply.

"As I have said—when the sun is midway."

"I will send for thee when I require thee," she said, suddenly petulant, and rose, her bangles tinkling as she retired to the hut.

"If she is a half-breed, I wonder how the devil she came to be here?" queried Newman as they walked back to camp.

"Probably kidnaped by a slave-raiding party, or more probably, these people some time or other massacred a mission station and took her as a child. She is obviously different, so therefore to be feared or despised. Brother and sister are not necessarily of any blood relationship, from an African point of view."

"True," assented Newman, reflectively. "She probably doesn't know who her parents were, and never will. Queer—it seems awful in a way. What the devil are you grinning at?" he added, with unusual peevishness.

"Well, as they say in the country which is three moons distant, the dame seems to have a crush on you. You've only got to play your cards and she'll *give* us the jewels!"

Newman glanced at him swiftly. Miêville appeared to have acquired a gift for languages.

As the shadows of the ant-hills threw elongated cones they took their guns and wandered out along the bank to the east of the village, accompanied as usual by Gambai and Umzilo. The river bank beside the abandoned stretch of land was about ten feet high, made concave by the current as it cañoned off the opposite bank, forming a basin of deep water. Just as Miêville bagged a brace of birds with a right and left, Umzilo caught the gleam of a spear in the grass and warned them that they were followed.

"The dame fears you may desert her!" remarked Miêville jocularly.

"—— you and the dame too!" snapped Newman and wondered at his own peevishness.

"It's more probable that we shall be damned if you don't discard the spirit of the Mayflower," retorted Miêville, smiling. "I haven't any taste for martyrdom for the sake of an ideal, if you have."

"I've a good mind to give those ginks a skinful of buckshot," said Newman savagely, desiring to change the subject and to vent an unaccountable fit of ill temper on some one.

Miêville smiled gently and advised that they pretend to be unaware of them. Newman strode on without replying and stood on the edge of the bank staring at the swirling current. A dark form resembling a submerged torpedo appeared and broke water with a pair of blunt periscopes from which peered tiny bright eyes. As Newman brought up his gun Gambai struck his arm down.

"Nay, Inkoos," he whispered, "these are crocodiles."

"I know that, you —— fool!" exclaimed Newman angrily.

"Nay," persisted Gambai, holding Newman's arm firmly. "They will kill us all if you wound a crocodile of the husband of the Mogwai."

NEWMAN stared at the bronze face and heard Miêville's soft laugh as he recollected that the custom of the Barotse insisted that the queen—king's sister—should be monogamous, but permitted her to dispose of any husband who bored her by an entertaining ceremony in which the said husband was thrown into the crocodile pool and his successor duly invested with the royal ivories.

Aware that they were still being followed they spread out, walking slowly over the ground which they supposed to be the site of the old monastery. The ground was uneven, scored with cattle spoor from the wet season, and ant-hills, with no suggestion of ruins of a wall or even a rising of the earth such as might have formed the foundation of a building; but, on the other hand, there were no signs of tree-stumps, which always mark old native fields.

Twice they wandered 'round as if trying —rather foolishly—to beat up birds, passing close to the great lone tree draped on the forest side with tenebrous tendrils, seemingly old enough to be the father of the forest.

"That's curious," remarked Newman. "It seems as if the creepers are kept cut

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away on this side. What a splendid picnic bower it would make!"

"Yes," agreed Miêville, "that's what it is, I think. But I hope we sha'n't provide the sandwiches!"

Newman stared at the great tree anew.

Just as they had decided to continue on along the bank beside the fringe of jungle Newman brought down a pheasant, which fell within the timber at the back of the cleared land. Gambai hurried forward to retrieve it, but on the edge he sank suddenly into the grass. Instantly Newman and Miêville followed suit.

Presently Gambai's hand rose farther away in the shelter of a bush, making the sign of buck. Doubled up, taking cover by every ant-hill and shrub, they joined him cautiously and, following the line of his hand, distinguished the horns of koodoo mingled in the bushes. Miêville decided to take the shot and, crawling forward on hands and knees, followed by Gambai, disappeared into the grass.

Newman and Umzilo sat waiting for the shot. The soft swirl of the river murmured on the warm air. From a long distance came the cry of a native talking across the river. Silence again—just the hot, dry sound of the forest. Evidently the koodoo had moved on, with Miêville on their track.

As Newman was wondering what the spying escort was doing a twitter began in the tree above him, a continuous, perky chatter. He swore; for the bird would surely give warning to the buck if they were still within hearing. Umzilo pointed silently to suggest that they accept the offer of the honey-bird, who would lead them to a hive, expecting that a blob would be left upon a branch as his share.

Newman nodded. As soon as they moved the bird shifted to the next tree, chattering busily, and so from tree to tree until about sixty yards away he changed his rhythm slightly and remained on a branch. While Umzilo swarmed up the tree the warrior scouts of an army of ants drew Newman's attention to the fact that he was obstructing their path, which, for military reasons, could not be permitted. He accepted the ultimatum and moved hurriedly, his foot slipping into an ant-bear hole.

As he sat on the side he remarked that the spoor of the bear was fresh. In all his African experience he had never seen an ant-bear, an animal of a most retiring disposition. Only about one in a hundred holes are occupied, but evidently the proprietor of this one was at home. Lying flat on his belly, Newman peered down in idle curiosity, for the holes are very deep, veritable dugouts.

In the soft mold a peculiar excrescence caught his eye. With a prospector's instinct, he tried to wipe off the earth to identify the species of rock, probably a bastard quartz. But the stuff crumbled in his hand. His curiosity was aroused, for the shape was decidedly angular. He stretched lower and scratched away the soil.

Umzilo, from the tree, saw Miêville returning, evidently frustrated by the honey-bird, whose noisy greediness had warned the game of the presence of man. When Miêville approached he found Newman sitting with a lump of earth in his hand, which he gave to Miêville without comment.

"Why, what is it?"

"Look at the form! It's an old, sun-dried brick! But how this can be the site of the monastery right here among the trees I don't understand. But that was never native work."

Miêville held it in his hand and stared around thoughtfully.

"Don't you remember that the monks were massacred nearly a century or more ago?"

"Sure! But they wouldn't have destroyed the building? There ought to be some trace of it left."

"There is. This. The building would have fallen to pieces years ago, once the roof was gone, which was probably burned. The rains would wash away every trace of the walls in a few years. These devils would never have repaired it. I doubt even if they ever occupied it The *ju-ju* of the crucifix would surely have made it *tabu*."

"That's so But, even then, how could the site have been here among the trees?" Newman gazed perplexedly at the jungle and then exclaimed: "Good God! how stupid we are. Unless the ground was kept clear artificially the trees would naturally spread right over. None of these trees is a hundred years old. Look over there, how much thicker they are yonder in the jungle."

"You're right. Although that big *tabu* fellow out back is more than a hundred, if

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he's a day. I reckon he's ten feet in diameter at least."

Newman was staring at the ant-bear hole.

"I wonder if the monks hid the stones in this hole?"

"No; there wouldn't be an ant-bear hole in the monastery, and I'll bet he never got a chance to get outside. Anyway I hope not, for the hole would have filled in long ago. Remember the cross in the northeast corner of the square on the map."

DISCUSSING the matter, they returned to camp, seeing no more of the spying warriors. At the tent door they found Maruwi squatting patiently. The Black Elephant had not yet awakened, he informed them; what had the white man's devils done to him?

"Tell him, Gambai," said Newman, exchanging glances with Miêville, "that we will come to see the Black Elephant in the morning."

Maruwi took snuff solemnly, rose and departed without remark. But as the first wind-broken cock stuttered at the dawn arrived a messenger bidding the white men to come immediately. Newman, aroused from a heavy slumber, vexedly bade Umzilo busy himself with satanic duties, but Miêville, commanding coffee, suggested that it would be as well for their health that they obey.

In the dewy freshness, when shadows shrink coyly, the cattle were prodding out to pasturage shepherded by nude bronzes, whose polished spears sought eagerly the first sun's ray. From the village rose blue wisps of smoke, feathering the cones against the turquoise sky, seeming to dance mystically to the soft rhythm of a native piano —iron prongs upon a calabash—of the Mogwai's musician. Before Sepopa's house were grouped five elders in their lion-skins, snuffing with bovine gravity.

The stolid absence of the customary "*Dumella!*" boded ill; although stertorous breathings reassured them. Maruwi, who did not acknowledge their presence with as much as the flicker of an eyelid, was seated in the doorway tapping snuff contentedly from the rhinoceros-horn canister suspended from his neck.

Stepping over him, they entered the hut. In the center smoldered a fire, the smoke percolating through the roof. As their eyes focused to the gloom they distinguished Mateka crouched upon a stool in the corner beneath the crucifix, and in the deeper density three other forms, which resolved into women, squatted immobile beside the couch of skins.

At the flash of an electric torch came three sharp "*Aies*" of astonishment, but they did not move save to lower the eyelids before the glare. Sepopa was lying flat upon his back, the mouth open, the head slightly doubled on the enormous neck, producing the throttled effort at the bottom of each breath. Newman eased the head, lifted up the eyelids and examined the pulse, watched in unresponsive silence by the four graven images.

"He's all right," was Newman's verdict. "I don't think they've doped him."

"Probably imagined that it wasn't necessary," remarked Miêville, smiling gently at the glimmer of the cross. "But if we don't persuade him to wake up pretty soon I guess there'll be trouble due."

Newman asked Mateka whether his father had moved in the night. Mateka merely grunted inarticulately without looking up.

"Sulky swine!" muttered Newman. "They've evidently got some game on. Let's try to rouse him."

Together they chafed and slapped the podgy hands of Sepopa, massaged the folds of his eyes and pinched hardly, merely breaking the rhythm of the breathing by choking grunts.

"Send Jaha for the electric machine and give him a shock," suggested Miêville.

At the call Jaha stepped over Maruwi with magnificent disdain, saluted smartly in military fashion, and stepped as disdainfully out again. As they awaited his return the immobility of the figures within and without the hut began to irritate. Newman walked to the door. Along the veranda wall placidly allowing the light of day to wake them, squatted the five figures, growing more bronze each moment.

Against the gate stood Umzilo, rigid. The monotonous rhythm of the Mogwai's musician throbbed a few yards away, seeming to blend with the chief's breathing, punctuated by the bleat of a goat, a child's voice and the broken-winded cock still excited by the sun. Newman glanced across at the roofs of the Mogwai's dwelling conscious of a wish that she would arrive: her presence would somehow make things

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appear more hopeful. Should the fat chief die suddenly . . . .

Newman peered back at Mateka. King's sons had ever a penchant to wear their father's shoes; also court favorites were apt to be instigators of such plots. The native mind was difficult to follow, a baffling mixture of cunning and superstition. Perhaps the flight of a hèron or the entrails of a duck had already sealed their fate.

He gazed at Miêville bending over the recumbent Sepopa. The native organic constitution was particularly resistant to intestinal irritants and yet had not the recuperative power of the white man. Probably the double narcotic had had a more intense effect than usual; if so, there was no cause for alarm; but, if the wily Maruwi had introduced a little concoction of his own, say of snake-poison, then the only chance of escape was in the hands of the Mogwai.

Yet suddenly Newman's masculinity caused him to hate himself for seeking safety in the fondness of a girl, and to be vexed with Miêville for having suggested the idea. He returned to the stool beside the four images around the couch. *Phew!* How they stank, that musty, acrid smell of the negro.

The immobility began to get on his nerves. Jaha seemed to be an infernal time bringing the battery. But was this a trap? Had they ransacked the camp and murdered Jaha? Were they waiting for some mystic sign to decide for the crocodiles or the pot? He ought to have been more careful; ought to have administered the medicine personally.

He switched on the electric torch and stared at the face of the chief in the violet circle of light. The fat eye sockets appeared caverns as deep as the nostrils of the nose, which disputed with the thick negroid lips on a billowy sea of bilious yellow. Newman began to ponder on the history of this creature in relation to the Mogwai. His attention was distracted by a faint tapping. Glancing 'round he saw Miêville rapping on the crucifix with his knuckle.

"Well?" suggested Newman.

"No," replied Miêville in a disappointed tone. "There's a small cracked sapphire on the stem, but nothing else save the setting pits filled with the dirt of years."

AT THAT moment Jaha returned with a Barotse bearing the battery. As he placed the box upon the floor the voice of Maruwi without began a sudden harangue and Mateka, rising, stood in the doorway. At the deep grunted chorus of *"Oughs!"* Newman paused and looked at Miêville. They walked to the door. Beyond Mateka they could see that the compound was full of warriors. Again at the cessation of Maruwi's voice came the affirmative chorus with an hysteric masculinity in the timbre which sent a quiver along the nerves.

The white men glanced at each other significantly.

"I think—" said Newman, and loosened the flap of his holster.

Miêville was smiling softly as he said:

"No good. Wait," and pointed to the battery.

Newman nodded and beckoned to Jaha to place the box before them and behind Mateka. Switching on the current, which was fairly powerful and newly charged, Newman grasped one handle with his left hand while Miêville took the other with his right.

Disdainfully Mateka continued to block the threshold. Warming to his subject as priest-orator, Maruwi drew louder and deeper barks of approval, appealing in Neronian fashion to the lusts of the people for slaughter. Then, just as he took up the tenor strain of the rippling harangue, Newman and Miêville seized Mateka firmly by the arms.

The convulsive bound dragged the two whites a full yard, but they held grimly; the shriek brought the mob of warriors to their feet. For a few moments Mateka struggled wildly; then the conviction that those terrible fingers which went right through his body from arm to arm was the grasp of the devil himself, cowed him into a trembling, crumpled figure from whose contorted lips issued a throttled whimpering.

The body of warriors, action paralyzed by a miraculous phenomenon, standing with spears upraised, saw their chief thrown like a sodden, empty bladder into the shadows of the hut and Maruwi, the redoubtable medicine-man, swiftly seized, convulsed and jerked, screaming, after him. Panic swept them from the compound as with frenetic strokes of a broom.

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IV

NEWMAN and Miêville returned to their camp with much dignity, escorted by Mateka and Maruwi, who were instructed to inform them as soon as Sepopo awakened.

Mateka was a puzzled and badly-scared youth. The severe shock of the manifestation of the power of the great crucifix had quite annihilated the awe of the local medical faculty whose counsels had led him to entertain fascinating possibilities of parricide with most terrifying results. But Maruwi, like most medicine-men, was a born cynic and a jealous guardian of the ignorances of the craft.

As soon as he recovered from the shock, he grew suspicious. Intuition and training told him that there was some trick. But how was it done? That it had nothing to do with the great *ju-ju* he opined. But yet. . . In his desperate wonder he came nigh to a belief in the occult of which he was high priest, a dismal enough fate for any villain. But his first thought was to reestablish his reputation with Mateka. So deciding that his white rivals had undoubtedly won the first bout, and that they must therefore be propitiated, he departed to the Mogwai intent upon getting in his own version first and working through her upon Mateka.

In discussing the affair Miêville was inclined to regret that they had been compelled to give a demonstration of "white magic," fearing that it would tend to excite the covetousness of Maruwi still more and through him Sepopa. However in the meantime the best thing to do was to take every advantage of their prestige to further their interests by camping on the site of the monastery.

In the late afternoon they again took their guns and wandered in the vicinity of the *tabu* tree. But beyond selecting the ant-bear hole as the spot on which to camp, they accomplished nothing in the way of reconstructing the site of the monastery which was necessary in order to locate approximately the position of the northeast corner given on the map. On their return they discovered a group of villagers escorting a calf from Maruwi and a tusk of ivory from Mateka.

The twain somewhat diffidently accepted an invitation to enter the tent where they were given tea and tobacco and duly amazed by the gramaphone which, Maruwi explained with great professional nonchalance, was the spirit of a white man imprisoned in the box, an exposition greeted with many admiring *"oughs"* from the throng of warriors, women, children and dogs squatting around the tent. However the entertainment was interrupted by a messenger bearing a summons from the Mogwai.

So as the cattle plodded lazily home, the Mogwai listened in awe to the voices of the dead. Her nephew, still with a nervous eye on the manipulation of the white men, attributed the manifestations to the *ju-ju*, but she, with better feminine logic, significantly regarded the man with-eyes-like-the-sky. As the fame and favor of the white men soared, the heart of Maruwi grew blacker. And even as they had prophesied for the third time—although with crowd psychology that was forgotten save by Maruwi—the Black Elephant stirred his vast limbs at the setting of the sun. Accordingly they were escorted with ceremony from the chamber of the Mogwai to the couch side of the chief.

At first Sepopa could not be made to comprehend that he had been dead—as Mateka insisted—for two days; and when he did, as yet unimpressed with the wonder workings of white magic, he creased his great face into a portentous scowl, uncertain whether he should visit a royal vengeance for their presumption or confer royal favors in the hope of gaining their beneficent powers. However satisfied that he was not only alive but feeling very fresh and hungry to boot, he postponed the matter in preference for food and wives, bestowing a few of his subjects' goats by way of a promise of gifts to come.

But in the evening while the royal musician plinked the calabash piano and chanted the royal virtues in war and women, his great black baby soul was made to quiver by a graphic recital by his favorite wife of the miracle worked by the white men. Mateka was summoned in haste; also Maruwi.

In the mind of Sepopa were many emotions. Rather annoyed that he had been dead when all these interesting things had been happening, he felt inclined to command another performance; but, if they were true, these men were magicians

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to be feared. Maruwi, too, was a bit of an unknown quantity. So like many people in doubt he trusted in his god, deciding, as Maruwi had done, upon a policy of watchful waiting.

To this end he ordered further propitiatory presents to the white gods and gave Maruwi an ivory bangle as a mark of esteem. That gentleman promptly repaid by suggesting that the power to perform these miracles lay, as every one knew, with the possessor of the magic box. He returned to his hut caressing images of a great feast at the destruction of his enemies, leaving the magic box in his very own care which would indubitably give him almost as autocratic a power as Sepopa.

At the same time Newman and Miêville were holding a council of war in their camp, both arriving at the conclusion that, as they had been diverted from their original pose as friendly white men to the dangerous attitude of demi-gods, their greatest chance of success lay in pressing the advantage of their prestige immediately. From Miêville came the suggestion that if they could arrange a hunt and provide the village with unlimited meat a gastronomic orgy would distract attention from their movements.

ACCORDINGLY in the morning they dispatched a fresh selection of presents which included two more rifles, with a demand for an immediate audience. They were received as on the first occasion. Sepopa lounging on skins on the veranda of the hut. Mateka, disguising a desire to wag his tail under a boyish sulkiness, squatted beside Maruwi. Gravely Newman insisted upon feeling the pulse of the fat chief and lifting up his eyelids, each movement noted with concern by Maruwi to be adapted for the benefit of his practise. But the touch of true magic was given by Miêville, who, with portentous solemnity, inserted a clinical thermometer under the tongue of the half-scared Sepopa, thereby adding another tangible object which the astute Maruwi became determined to possess.

Sepopa having been declared to be sound and well, the business of the court moved to a series of questions regarding the miraculous revelation vouchsafed. Newman warned them of the dangers of white magic, informing Mateka that the power of the great *ngaka* which he had experienced was only manifested in times of danger to its priests. Much impressed, Sepopa scowled at his son as if inclined to punish him for having put his own life in jeopardy. However, the twain grunted rapidly together.

Very determinedly Newman demanded permission to camp among the trees to dig for rocks. Sepopa returned to the *ngaka*. Newman, pretending to be deeply offended, reiterated his request. Sepopa grunted and rolled over on his skins sulkily. Before leaving Newman soothed Mateka who looked as morose as his father, by an invitation to hunt with them.

They gave orders to shift camp to the desired spot, consoled by the hope that they had drowned any suspicions of their movements in the woods in the greater interest of the rival *ju-ju*. In the afternoon Mateka arrived accompanied by a band of warriors, demanding as excitedly as schoolboys, that they cross the river on the trail of a small herd of elephants reported to be in the vicinity.

The new rifle, carried by a favored hunter, was much in evidence, and its astonishing merits were chanted as they paddled down-stream. After a futile attempt to persuade Mateka that the speed of the bullet was not increased by raising the backsight, and that something more was required to secure the death of the quarry than merely firing the gun, Miêville substituted a blank cartridge for use in the communal interest.

The elephants were located in a swampy glade. Mateka desired the white men to accompany him. But the native method of crawling as noiselessly as a grass snake to within a yard of the quarry which, although keen of hearing and smell, is as blind as a bat at noon, could not be imitated by any white man. Much to Mateka's disgust, Newman fired suddenly at a distance of a couple of hundred yards, bringing a bull to his knees. As the rest of the herd plunged away the crowd of warriors behind leaped to their feet, uttering yells of delight.

By the time they had raced to him the wounded beast had struggled to his feet and was leaning, bellowing with rage and pain, against a sapling which curtsied to his weight. At a yard range they speared him to death. Within a few minutes the

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body was disemboweled and a chanting, yelling mass began the cutting of the mountain of flesh and the hacking out of the tusks.

Then suddenly came a piercing cry. From the blue shadows of the forest thundered silently a black rhinoceros, vengefully seeking an alien smell. With limbs splattered with gore the crowd dispersed as swiftly as a cloud of gnats at a blow of the hand, into the long grass and bushes. Newman, turning to dodge, slipped on the blood-soaked grass and fell into the cavernous belly of the elephant a foot ahead of the driving horn of the rhinoceros which squelched into the mighty chest ribs beside him.

The uproar of yells and the boom of two muzzle-loaders blended with the snorts of the rhinoceros as he plunged wildly to free the buried weapon. Then a shot cracked sharply from Miêville's express. As the maddened beast crumpled up beside his fellow a warrior's head and shoulders emerged from beside Newman. Dripping from a bath of blood he fled screaming into the shadows.

THAT evening the village was drunk. Squatting 'round huge fires they gorged singed meat to the rhythmic beat of the tom-toms until they collapsed in a torpor of repletion—to wake to eat again. In the white men's camp the paddlers held their own orgy; and within the royal palisade the royal family feasted on the titbits to the voices of Caruso and Tetrazzini with variations of orchestral music by the Boston Symphony.

On the other side of the fire sat the Mogwai with her women, the light flickering on her bangles and drawing yellow planes on her firm breasts. She ate little, devoting her interest to the manipulation of the gramaphone which she made Newman teach her, refusing to allow any of her slaves even to touch the sacred records. Sitting on his hams near Mateka, Maruwi ate steadfastly. Each man had an eye upon Miêville as if continually expecting some strange manifestation.

As the hour wore on to the mutter of the drums Sepopa began to feel the effects of the white men's firewater, rolling back on his skins and laughing like a Brobdingnagian baby. He hiccoughed a demand for more brandy and grew sulky because Newman refused, saying that they only had enough for medicinal purposes.

Having expected that the meat orgy might prove an occasion for the rites of the *ju-ju*, Newman asked Mateka. But he was far too overcome with feasting to comprehend. The Mogwai replied that the dance was only held at the full moon and that a sacrifice was essential to propitiate the *ju-ju;* adding with a naïve candor that a captive was always secured beforehand.

Conscious of the leer of Maruwi's eyes upon him greedily, Newman involuntarily looked 'round at the half-moon veiled by clouds in the west as Miêville whispered:

"The sooner we get through the better. Our friend on the left here would probably find us more to his taste than elephant steak. Listen to the drums!"

Newman shuddered. He was aware of the Mogwai regarding him intently as ever she did when he spoke in English. Abruptly he rose to select a new record, "Mendelssohn's Spring Song," thinking that he needed something to counteract the throb of those macaber drums.

Within a few minutes afterward Maruwi quietly toppled over and lay still, his cock feathers singeing on a stray ember of the fire, ghostly eyes upstaring. As the Black Elephant gurgled drunkenly the Mogwai displayed a sudden interest in the white man's firewater, and spluttered over the glass which Newman handed to her.

He turned to make a remark to Miêville, but that individual had disappeared. Then in some curious way which he strove to dismiss as ridiculous, Newman was aware of a sense of isolation that among these savages intoxicated with alcohol and meat, he was alone with the Mogwai. He felt a bashful desire to flee before the directness of her gaze.

Possibly a quarter of an hour elapsed before Miêville materialized out of the shadows, but by that time Newman was prepared to quarrel with him for having delayed his departure, whispering an imperative desire to return to camp. Miêville softly, ironically, it appeared to Newman in the flicker of the fire, assented. So on the excuse that they were tired after the chase they rose to go, solemnly shaking hands with the Mogwai, the only person,

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save her slaves who did not count, remaining rational. Sepopa snored liquidly upon his couch of skins.

As they passed through the deserted village the misty blue cones of the hut roofs appeared sinister against the green sky; and the drums, away to the left beyond the cattle pens where dim figures flitted around the carmine glow of fires, had fallen to a sullen mutter more menacing.

V

IN THEIR tent they examined the map once more with the magnifying glass; but the marks were so nearly obliterated and so crudely drawn that no further information could be gathered from it.

"I guess this is going to be some job to locate the exact site of the monk's cache," remarked Miêville, handing the map to Newman, who glanced at him in small surprise at the unusual pessimistic tone.

"Yes," he agreed, "the chance doesn't seem promising, but we must have a good shot at it. That's due to you, anyway."

"Thanks. But I suspect that old crook Maruwi has about got our numbers." Miêville slipped the gold chain attached to the crucifix around his neck. "That's why I'm so anxious to get away."

At the hour of the duyker they were up, preparing for a thorough investigation of the ground. As they had reckoned, not a native was abroad, save three bronze corydons beside their mottled herd. The drums had ceased during the night; but when the sun was a span above the tree-tops they began again, tentative, uncertain.

Using the ant-bear hole in which the brick had been found as the center point, they drew a circle with a radius of a hundred yards; and made, with the assistance of Jaha, Umzilo and Gambai, a systematic search of every square yard in the hope of finding a clue of another brick or other sign of ruins. At noon they returned to camp for lunch and a rest in the heat of the day, unsuccessful.

Newman, rather tired and hot, was uncommunicative; Miêville, who appeared as fresh as usual, evinced an abnormal peevishness, carping at the food and rating Jaha for not having cleaned his battery to his satisfaction. A little dispiritedly, rather irritated at the necessity to go out when he would have preferred to have a siesta, Newman shortly responded to Miêville's suggestion to research the ground.

"We, or these —— niggers, may have easily overlooked something," commented Miêville, smiling softly at Newman.

"But if we don't find anything this trip, what d'you propose to do?" demanded Newman, a little surprised at his own tetchiness.

"Throw a wider circle, and if we don't find anything then, go farther on to the next village. If the site of the old monastery isn't right here it's not near this village."

"But if it isn't here it's scarcely likely that there's another village with a crucifix as a *ju-ju* in this part of the country."

"Oh, one never knows," responded Miêville, letting drive at a rocketting pheasant.

About five in the afternoon when Newman and Miêville were sitting, rather disconsolately, in the shade of a wild plum tree, they heard a musical jingle, and looking up beheld the Mogwai advancing, followed by her Mamboë slaves. The lithe swing of the hips and the willowy carriage of the shoulders suggested a bronze hamadryad moving in a shower of yellow kisses.

"I guess she's getting curious to see what we're up to," remarked Newman as they rose to receive her.

"Have you ever read Freud?" inquired Miêville, smiling gently.

"*Dumella*, Amethlokadi! *Dumella*, Monepi!" greeted the Mogwai, and the Mamboë squatting in the grass softly clapped their hands, murmuring greetings in liquid phrases.

A sudden realization of the beauty of this young savage moving in the forest seized upon Newman forcibly, awakening a consciousness of attraction which scared him. As he walked beside her in European style through the long grass, the remoteness of her individuality as a native melted racial prejudice.

He grew as nervous as he would have done in the presence of a white girl with whom he was half in love. He heartily wished that the onus of conversation would fall upon Miêville; regretted that he could speak the language. Once there came a puff of wind flirting a strand of her hair across his face, the touch of which caused him to stumble in his speech. And

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on the slow hot air was borne the low triple notes of the drums.

WHEN the Mogwai had seated herself on a camp chair, her women grouped about her, Newman grew still more conscious of a sense of unreality, as if he were being forced against his will; and a hatred streaked his mind for that familiar ivory face, bearded, with the soft smile, sweetly ironic. Unconsciously he was offended that the woman was wooing him; for the male principle, active in her, awoke the feminine in this yellow-bearded explorer of many countries so that he became coy and blushed beneath the tan when calmly she said—

"Listen, oh, Eyes-Like-the-Sky, who hath a beard like unto the setting sun upon the waters, I would that I should be thy hand-maiden (wife)."

Acutely conscious that the solemn features of Miêville concealed a convulsion of mocking laughter, Newman wriggled under the point of her fearless gaze. A sense of utter shame, of the ludicrous, was woven with a sense that the throb of the drums was within his body. The red knowledge of the crocodile pool was flapping on his mind like the wings of a frightened bird.

The others seemed to swim to a vast distance; he appeared to be a grovelling conventional worm pleading with a colossal goddess of love for mercy. His words floated slowly upward to that haughty face which was as remorselessly fierce as passion, and spoke with the terrifying truth of a child, words which seemed to originate from an exterior will.

"Oh, Mogwai, whose hair is woven from night shadows of the forest, it is not meet that the leopard should mate with the lioness."

The clear eyes clouded and the haughty lips twitched petulantly.

"The wisdom of the white man and his ways are as foolish as the chattering of monkeys. The fluttering of the small bird within thy breast may well turn thy heart to water!"

So saying she rose haughtily; but her eyelids quivered like a disappointed child. When she had gone the masculine in Newman wilted beneath the contemptuous smile of Miêville.

"The fluttering of the small bird within thy breast may well turn thy heart to water."

"What th' —— 're you grinning at?"

"It's no time for grinning, my friend," retorted Miêville. "Indeed I had better weep; for a Puritan discards pearls as surely as a swine. My dear Sturge, I don't know where you've learned about women, but that young savage there has a finer mind as well as a finer body than all the women in the Americas. But seriously, we shall have to get—unless you——"

"I'm not going until we've got the jewels," said Newman sullenly. "Or at least until we know they aren't here."

"As a matter of fact, I don't think we shall ever find them here," replied Miêville, smiling queerly. "And remember, that a crocodile has no bite like a woman scorned!"

Newman frowned and turned away.

"Well, I'm not going yet."

"As you will!"

NEWMAN flung himself into a chair and began to smoke, uneasily conscious that Miêville had reason. That phrase of the Mogwai's might be a threat. He felt angered against her for having put him in such an awkward position. A curious sense that he was a fool bewildered him; and the Mogwai seemed to know it.

He passed his hand across his forehead which was slightly hot and dry. I must have a touch of fever, he concluded, and decided to take quinine. Why the devil couldn't she fall in love with Miêville? But he frowned at the idea. Yet crocodiles . . . It was possible in this romantic country. . . He found himself automatically sizing up the position of the camp from a military point of view.

Good God, there wouldn't be a chance. She certainly was beautiful, undeniably. But the jewels. No, he would not quit before they had the jewels or found that it was futile to search for them. Tomorrow would settle that anyway. That was only fair to Miêville to whom the jewels meant so much. But by tomorrow . . . .

His reflections were cut short by the sound of a scuffle and the next moment Maruwi emerged from the tent, head foremost, landing at his feet. As Newman started to his feet Miêville appeared and delivered a terrific kick in the ribs of the prostrate Maruwi. The shrill grunt at

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the impact was followed by a convulsive unbending and Maruwi scuttled 'round the tent and into the sheltering jungle, leaving the two white men staring at each other.

"Good God!" ejaculated Newman. "Have you gone mad?"

"Not at all," responded Miêville, smiling. "I caught that swine skulking in the tent."

"But he'll raise the whole tribe after us."

"Possibly be of assistance to the dame."

Newman turned away and stared at the distant village.

"Well, that settles it. We shall have to get out tonight if we're going to save our skins; jewels or no jewels."

Newman made no reply. For a moment he had been stunned by the unexpected brutality of Miêville's action, but the ironic remark had sobered him. The fault was his; he had tactlessly enraged the Mogwai, and Miêville had done this in order to make their going imperative, in spite of his urgent need for the value of the jewels. By ——, that was fine of him. But he wished his head would not ache so. He turned to Miêville.

"I'm sorry. I guess you're right. And I think I've got a go of fever coming on."

They began to pack immediately in the short twilight, hoping that the effects of the orgy would last long enough to allow them to get a start in the night.

No one in the village appeared to stir; even the drums had stopped which might indeed be an ill omen. As soon as it was dark Gambai and some paddlers were sent to creep along the river bank to steal the canoes. The white men and their Matabele sat with their rifles ready to fight their way to the river if need be. But no untoward action occurred. Then the soft call of a night jar warned them that the canoes were in the bend of the river awaiting them.

The transport to the river, about a hundred yards, and the loading of the canoes passed quietly. Seemingly the village had sunk in a lethargy of intoxication. But as Newman sat on the bank staring at the swirling shadows of the river, a large regret stirred. He saw the petulant lips of the Mogwai, the lithe swing as if her hips were made of rubber. Or was it the fantasy of fever? Absurd. She was merely a savage.

The half-moon seemed a sinister promise of its own fruition as he slipped into the canoe. They began to glide swiftly with the current.

VI

THE first rapids were negotiated more easily by sliding the half-empty canoes with the torrent. They got under way again at the last hoot of the owl. When the buck sought shade to slumber they passed the wooded islet. The going was rapid with the current and the menace quickened the rhythm of the paddles. Lying on the blankets staring at the reed roof of his *litanga*, Newman dozed fitfully. His head ached slightly, but the tonic of the quinine freshened him

He was still conscious of that queer regret hovering like a nimbus around the image of the Mogwai. Perhaps after all Miêville had been overcautious; had they stayed, the kicking of Maruwi might well have heightened their prestige, impressed the savages with the masterful brutality which they would have appreciated. And as for the Mogwai . . . .

Yet after all the loss was Miêville's. The jewels did not matter to him; if Miêville had been too prudent the intent to sacrifice implied an admirable trait of character, for on a question of physical courage Miêville could not be doubted. Yet he would have liked to have seen the sacrificial dance, he concluded.

In the afternoon they lost considerable time as a small waterfall around which the canoes had to be portered resulted in the accidental capsizing of one. At sunset they camped on a convenient shoal. Miêville wished to continue on immediately after the moon rose and although the paddlers were tired, the terror of Sepopa's people urged them to agree with him; but Newman in whose mind the conviction had been growing that their fears were unfounded peevishly refused and ordered Umzilo to pitch the tent. The basis of this cantankerousness was revealed when he began making faces at the food.

"What's the matter?" demanded Miêville.

"Ouf! I don't know. I'm off my feed. Ugh, I believe I've got a real go of malaria," he muttered, feeling his hot dry forehead, and called to Umzilo to bring the medicine-chest. "Ah!" he exclaimed, holding up a clinical thermometer, "this will tell me all

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about it. Gosh, I'm thirsty. Jaha, bring me another cup—any old bottle—*chetcha!*"

Presently he examined the glass tube and began to laugh noisily.

"Say, Sturge," observed Miêville, looking sharply at him. "You're a bit light-headed. What temperature?"

"Hundred and four, point two," said Newman, laughing uproariously. "I—I think I'll—I'll hit the straw—eh? ——!"

He stood up, swayed giddily and sat down on the bed in a heap.

"Give me another fifteen grains of quinine and ten of phenacetin, will you, Miêville?" he demanded more quietly, undressing. "Umzilo, take off these boots—and some calomel—and tell Jaha to bring me oceans of tea, hot, —— it, hot!" he added fractiously, when he had been assisted between the blankets. "Don't wobble so," he cried, staring hard at the tent roof. "Oh, *Haiwani, ana kanhebek, ana kanhebek.*"

PERIODS of semi-conscious delirium followed: his body seemed to be inflated with gas and only by clinging desperately to the bed could he avoid floating to the top of the tent, a horror rendered acute by the conviction that should he float out he would rise up and up like a balloon until he should burst in the clouds. He tasted of Dante's inferno, roasting and freezing at the same time; an agonizing thirst possessed him, and outside sitting in the branches of a pink tree, which he could see through the door of the tent, was the Mogwai holding a green lacquer tray filled with his mother's wedgwood cups steaming with tea.

He cried and implored her to bring him some; at last she began to throw them. He caught them and drank greedily, wondering at her foolishness in refusing to come down out of the tree.

Then through a mist of queer dreams in which he became interested in a secondary conscious way, he merged into an acute realization of the Mogwai who lay in his arms, an eye of the moon peering through the door blue-tinting the curve of her arm. The welling of happiness was indescribable. He could only laugh, laugh with intense joy.

But what was that? Some one laughed. He started to get up angrily, but the weight of the body overbalanced him. His forehead struck the iron leg of the bed. Suddenly he found himself on the floor of the tent, which was in darkness except for a perpendicular of blue moonlight. What was he doing? He sat quiet, trying hard to collect his wits. His brain seemed to be the mechanism of clockwork, yet as light as swan's-down, with the wheels flying madly. If they would only keep still a moment he would be able to think. But they whirled on the faster.

Shadows passed across the moon; an owl hooted dismally; the persistent yapping of a jackal irritated him. Where were Miêville and Umzilo? Umzilo ought not to have left him alone in the tent. A frenzy of exasperation shook him.

"Miê-ville! Um-zi-ilo!" he shouted in a hoarse whisper.

Oh, —— it, why didn't they come to him? He wept in peevish impotence. Then it occurred to him to wonder why he was still sitting there. He became aware that his face and fingers were sticky. Perhaps that fool had upset the can of butter on the floor. The brute, why wasn't he here?

Angrily he tried to scramble to his feet. Something hard hit his head. He grabbed at what appeared to be a stick. The flash of blue in the moonray revealed a blade. He thrust it from him. Why couldn't Umzilo see that they kept their spears out of the tent? Where was Umzilo anyway?

He stood up and shouted again, swayed and fell against the table. The shock caused a dozen steam hammers to pound in his head. He clutched at the tent pole. Again he heard that laugh; and realizing that it was himself, flew into a weak passion. What on earth was he laughing at? His tongue was parched, his throat burning. His hand struck something cold. It was a water-bag hanging on the pole. He tore it down and gulped greedily.

For a moment he felt better and stronger; and his wrath against Umzilo grew. He essayed to step boldly to the tent door, but his feet felt extraordinarily light; they would not go where he wished. Dizzily he caught at the canvas flap and dragged it open. Squatting 'round a fire in the moonlight were a dozen natives. What were the fools doing there at that time of night? Newman waved a hand and screamed:

"*E-eh-wen-a! E-eh!* Um-zi-lo!"

Simultaneously the heads turned toward

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him with the ludicrous effect of puppets worked by a wire. Then with a unanimous smothered yell they leaped to their feet and fled into the bush. The action instead of surprising him, excited a wave of homicidal rage.

He turned and grabbed wildly for the discarded spear, tripped and sprawled over the bed. The concussion bereft him of his unstable senses. Then he found that he was lying on his belly with his head hanging over the bedside. Opening his eyes he stared at an object in the ray of the moon. Slowly he recognized the face of Umzilo which appeared to be grinning at him.

Now he was too exhausted for anger. He could only wonder dimly; gradually there dawned upon him the fact that the glazed eyes were those of a dead man. Association recalled the delirium of love and as he clawed in horror at his sticky face the feathery clockwork in his brain whirred into infinity.

VII

AT THE end of the long empty corridor of returning consciousness Newman emerged into a nebulous universe of light and rhythm, a light that dazzled and a rhythm that choked the larynx, which melted gradually, as concrete associations were linked, into an oblong of yellow sunlight and the stertorous throb of a single drum.

Mild curiosity flapped against the pane of weakness until a moving object stimulated the brain. Bewilderment was smoothed out by recognition of the roof of a hut instead of his tent. The missing tent stirred the memory. Yes, he recollected escaping during the night, camping and going to bed with fever; wisps of quaint and horrible dreams fluttered. But what had hapened? Why was he in a hut and where?

He peered 'round, recognized the Mogwai and imagined that he was still in delirium. He stared strainedly at her as she stood gazing at him beside the couch, and pawed at his eyes to wipe away the figment of his hot brain. But the figure remained. Still he was unconvinced, wishing that the drums would not hurt his throat.

"*Dumella*, Amethlokadi."

The liquid vibration of her voice broke the frozen breath of unreality.

"*Dumella*, Mogwai."

What could have happened? Where was Miêville? How——

"Drink," commanded the Mogwai composedly, proffering a calabash bowl of curdled milk.

He drank, thirstily and mechanically, plunging amid a herd of questions.

"Thank you, oh, Mogwai," he said. "And tell me what hath brought me hither? Where is my brother, Monepi?"

"I know not," she replied, "for my eyes have not seen him."

"Know ye aught that hath happened?"

"Maruwi, the medicine-man, spoke and put evil in the heart of the Black Elephant so that the Black Elephant was wroth and sent warriors to fetch thee. They brought thee and Jaha, the Matabele. Thy brother, Monepi, hath fled."

"Fled! What meanest thou?" A paroxysm of rage shook him feverishly. "These offspring of swine hath killed him."

"Nay, as I have told thee, he hath fled. But he will return."

He looked at her, hated the petulant compression of her lips, and fell back on the couch, his head ringing with the effort of emotion.

"I would speak with my man, Jaha," he announced painfully.

The Mogwai did not reply, but she left the hut. The drum throbbed on relentlessly, seeming to be echoed within his burning skull. What had they brought him back for? The image of the great lone tree arose in his mind. But Miêville. What had they done with him? Had they killed him or was he somewhere in the village, bound, a captive for the sacrificial dance? God, would Jaha never come? What was the Mogwai going to do with him?

He tossed distractedly, almost deciding that he was still in delirium. Shadows swept the oblong of sunlight. He turned to see Jaha escorted by fuzzy-haired warriors, their spears glinting ominously. Jaha squatted and saluted gravely, his guards remaining silhouetted in the doorway.

"What meaning hath this?" demanded Newman, leaning on his arm.

"Oh, Inkoos!" replied Jaha in Sintebili so that the Mogwai would not comprehend, "many strange things have happened. We are the captives of Sepopa, the offspring of swine, the father of——"

"Cut that out," exclaimed Newman

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rritably, adding— "Tell thou me all that hath happened from the time that the sickness came upon me at the camp of many gazelle."

"It is done. When the evil spirit did enter into thee thou didst call loudly, even as the hyena crieth, and thou didst fight with the strength of bulls. And whilst we tended thee, Umzilo and I, we heard the sons of dogs talk concerning thee, saying that since the *Mosi-oa-Tonya* (evil spirit of the Victoria Falls) had stricken thee it was a sign that thou wert doomed to make good sport for the children of Sepopa or mayhap for the Mogwai, but that as Monepi had said it were better for them to flee before they were overtaken by destruction. Ow!

"And they began to prepare the canoes. I spoke with Monepi, saying that we could not do this thing, and he smiled and said that we should place thee in thy canoe when all was ready. But behold when at the first kiss of the moon, we began to make ready thy tent Monepi appeared and forbade us, and when we cried out upon him he called upon Gambai to hasten, saying that now there was no time. Then we knew what was in the black heart of the eater of offal and lifted up our voices; but he smiled, saying that it were better to leave a half-dead man that the dogs of Sepopa might worry, giving sure time that the others escape. Ow!

"So saying he commanded that we enter the canoe, and lifted the small gun with five voices against us. But when he knew that our hearts were not yellow he smiled, saying that three would make a greater feast than one. Ow! And when they were gone into the shadows we, Umzilo and I, prepared for the coming of the dogs of Sepopa.

"The sun rose, fled on and was swallowed up, and still we watched for the coming, even unto the first kiss of the moon. And still they came not. As sleep lay heavy upon us, Umzilo lay down beside thee by the fire. Everything save the voices of the forest was still until the sun embraced the moon when there came the whisper of the paddles. So knowing that the time had come to die I rose. But I was stricken from behind. Ow!

"And when Jaha met Jaha the moon was wholly possessed by the sun and I was bound in the hands of Mateka, the offspring of dung. And I heard them talk among themselves, saying that Maruwi had slain Umzilo from behind the tent and that none save he dared to go to thee for fear of the *Mosi-oa-Tonya* and that the magic box was not there. Wrath was Mateka and Maruwi because Monepi had gone. And Mateka with many canoes and warriors, continued on after Monepi, bidding them bring us alive to Sepopa. Ow! So was it."

VIII

NEWMAN balked at the largeness of Miêville's alleged treachery. Solemnly Jaha reaffirmed. Again Newman's mind yawned wide, yet could not assimilate the fact. He lay partially stunned, staring at Jaha. Could the man have invented such a story? But for what purpose? For that matter what could have been Miêville's motive? Obviously to save his skin. That terribly cynical remark that a half-dead man would serve to delay the wolves sounded appallingly like him.

Once more Newman attempted to swallow the circumstantial evidence. Yet that Miêville should desert a sick partner, taking guns and food, leaving him defenseless at the mercy of savages, seemed incredible treachery, unspeakable and meaningless; for why could he not have placed him in a canoe as Jaha and Umzilo had wished to do? No, he had, according to Jaha, deliberately abandoned him when to save him would have been no more risk or trouble than placing a bale of goods in a canoe. Had Miêville gone mad? Was Jaha mad? Was he, Newman, mad—still delirious?

Dumbly he gazed around at the warriors squatting on their hams in the doorway, at the conical top of a roof bathed in yellow sunlight, and back again at Jaha gravely regarding him. A void ached: a void created by a sense of causality needing a motive. Why? Why? There seemed to be no motive. From the filthiness of the act a poisonous fungus appeared to spring up in his mind, the clammy head of which shut out the sun and cast a dank shadow, depressing. The next conscious sensation was a slight smarting of the eyes due to the smoke from a smoldering fire beside which was the Mogwai upon her knees blowing the embers. Through the door he could see a

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planet in a greening sky, so that he knew that it must be late. From outside came the occasional bleat of a goat or the screech of a night bird. The drum had ceased, for which he was grateful; and his head did not ache so much. Images in his mind appeared sharper.

For a minute or two he lay silent, watching the tinkling movements of the Mogwai who seemed to be boiling something in a pot. He wondered how long he had been asleep; whether they had caught Miêville, brushing aside a tacit acceptance of his guilt half-ashamedly.

A movement attracted the attention of the Mogwai. She glanced up and rose, the glow rippling in red, yellow and blue points upon her ornaments, her hair, and her body nude save for a wildcat's skin around her loins; seeming as she moved through the smoke a colossal goddess exuding incense. For a moment beauty dominated Newman; then he saw that she was proffering him a small calabash from which arose a familiar and appetizing odor. As he raised himself upon his elbow and took it from her, she smiled like a delighted child.

"What is it?" he asked, puzzled.

"Drink, Amethlokadi! It is white man's meat-water which thy slave Jaha has prepared."

"Jaha? Oh. Where is he?"

"He sleeps without near to thee."

He glanced at her with a sense of gratitude and drank thirstily of the beef tea which Jaha, through the Mogwai, had saved from marauding fingers. As he handed the calabash back to her he wondered what was in her mind. What did she intend now? What if he should refuse again? Those sloe eyes could change from liquid affection to a savage glint as rapidly as comes a cyclone in the China Seas.

Would it be the great lone tree or the crocodiles? Ugh! Life was sweet—and she was beautiful! "Crocodiles have no bite like a woman scorned!" Miêville had paraphrased. Newman scowled at the recollection. But he had to determine his own fate. The lady or the crocodile—suggested the conundrum of "The Lady or the Tiger," which made him laugh hysterically.

"Knowest thou, oh, pretty one, what is in the heart of the Black Elephant? Hath he evil toward me?"

"I know not the heart of the Black One," she replied. "Save that the Black One was wroth with thee as I. Maruwi would have thee put to the death at the Great Feast, but I loved thee and claimed thee according to my right as the Mogwai.

"Yet the Black One would not, but I spake and said: 'These are foolish words, oh, Black One, for the white man hath great knowledge of medicine and guns. He gave thee water which has made thee whole. Wouldst thou cast away good medicine?' And because I, Haiwani, the Mogwai, loved thee the Black One called to all the chiefs of the village and spake, saying, 'Know, oh, my people, that I, the Black One, the Bull Calf, give to Haiwani, my sister, the Mogwai, the white man, Amethlokadi. Know that, for I have said it, and see that no harm come to him.' And so," she concluded, "thou art my man and I thy handmaiden."

Newman stared at her as she regarded him affectionately. An excuse which he had craved had been given him. But—he moved uneasily, conscious of the race barrier. She came to him and kneeled, placing one cool hand upon his forehead.

"Sleep, beloved!" she said quietly. "Thou art still sick and the dawn is not yet come."

As he gazed at her face close above his head the regularity of her features was borne upon him. The nose was perfectly aquiline; the mouth clean cut and the lips slender, petulant—made for kisses. But she was brown skinned. Oh why—yet any white child brought up nude in the tropical sun . . . After all he, at Miêville's suggestion, had taken it for granted that she was a half-breed. He seized her hands and examined the fingernails, the sure test. No trace at all was there of black blood; pure white she was. The racial inhibition removed was as the casting of distorting spectacles; he saw her with clear eyes. Impelled by a welling sense of adoration he seized and kissed her.

"Oh, little gazelle, indeed thou art comely."

"A bird singeth within my heart!" she answered. "Oh, my man whose beard is like unto the setting of the sun upon the waters, thou art like unto a young lion!"

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IX

BY DAYBREAK Newman was in delirium. For three days and nights the Mogwai did not leave his side. Jaha imperilled his life by arguing with her; for he maintained that he knew more about the white man's medicine than she could possibly know. With suspicious eyes she allowed him to give Newman medicine which he had seen his master use. Fortunately it was quinine. But the Mogwai, to make sure, concocted a compound of herbs which if it failed to do any good, did no harm.

For long hours she would sit holding Newman's hand, cooling his fevered face with soft fingers, ministering to his demands for drink. She did not seem to need any sleep. The tall graceful figure, in the single cat-skin hovered like a dusky angel around the lowly bedside. She would turn with tigerish eyes upon any one who dared to enter the hut or make a noise without; by her command the drums were forbidden lest they annoy the "husband of the Mogwai."

On the third day he was conscious and discovered that his temperature was below normal. The extract of meat which Jaha had rescued was invaluable to his convalescence. One of his first sane questions had drawn a petulant crease on the brow of the Mogwai; but he could get no news of Miêville. Mateka had not yet returned, Jaha told him.

Inclined to depression by the physical weakness he would lie for hours on a pile of skins in the courtyard basking in the morning sun brooding. Then would the Mogwai come and crouch beside him, intently watching his every expression with her luminous eyes. A light bronze arm jingling with ivory bangles would stretch out to smooth his hair, imprison his hand and dumbly smother it with kisses. At times her devotion would overwhelm him; and as his strength grew the power of her presence increased.

On the fifth day he had been more concerned than ever over the fate of Miêville; a sudden hatred for him—always providing that he was guilty, characteristic of the hopeful doubt ever present in his mind—grew in ratio to the possibility that he had managed to escape Mateka and his band. In the late afternoon a sudden desire to walk abroad possessed him. He spoke to the Mogwai and she assented, smiling delightedly. They set out together.

Down the valley studded with anthills, the herd of cattle were slowly browsing their way to the village. Mamboë women grinding corn between two stones looked up and peeked around at the "husband of the Mogwai," jabbering and clucking among themselves, after they had passed, in the eternal feminine way. Pale-blue smoke hung like a nimbus over the village.

Weaker than he had imagined himself to be, Newman grew tired. They sat down together on the river bank in the mottled shade of a tree. A little way up the bank a man was setting basket fish-traps. The Mogwai called to him. He went off at a lope into the forest and presently reappeared bearing something in his hand.

"What is it, little gazelle?" demanded Newman, amused at the Mogwai's absurd air of content.

"Honey for my lord," she smiled, taking the comb from the man's hand.

Enchanted by her radiant happiness Newman forgot his troubles for the moment; they laughed and played like happy children.

"Here little baby!" he said, holding out a blob of honey on his finger; and she gobbled it up and kissed him.

The sun dipping to the tree-tops began to filter through the under branches. With her back against a bole the Mogwai drew Newman to her and arranged her hair to shield his face from the sun spots. After a while she asked him of what he thought.

"Of the land of my people—" he had begun, unsuspecting the volcanic eruption.

She flung his shoulders from her and sprang to her feet.

"Dost thou hold me as a feather in the wind?" she cried scornfully, chin in air. "Does a stag in the rut return to the dam? And thou? Go thou where thou wilt. I have given the Black One my life for thee. Take it and go!"

Her eyes filled with tears. She fled into the bush. For a moment Newman hesitated, bewildered. He found her in the long grass, sobbing. Kneeling by her side he experienced a revulsion of feeling and began kissing her madly. They returned to the village, the straggle-bearded white man in tattered khaki and the skin-clad

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queen of the wilds, chattering and laughing like children.

But that evening as he lay upon his couch talking to the Mogwai beside him he noticed the great moon bound an inch above the tree-tops like a released balloon; and as the sinister threat of its fruition passed across his mind like a dank bat there came a sudden throb of a drum. It seemed that his heart waited until the next beat. Then steadily followed the *trup—trrup*. He looked at the Mogwai who was listening.

"Mateka is returning."

Instantly Newman shrank to an individual another world away. Was Miêville with them? Was he guilty? Could he save him?

No man guilty of such a despicable act deserved life. Yet—he was a fellow white and a countryman. God only knew what had prompted him. Suddenly he asked the Mogwai what they would do with Miêville if they had caught him, knowing well the answer. But she replied indifferently that that was a matter for Sepopa, and left him.

AS HE waited alone, breaking his teeth on a dozen futile questions and surmises, there came a distant high-pitched chant breaking to a clamorous chorus of grunting *"oughs,"* answered from the village by men and dogs. The rhythm of the drums sped swifter; the clamor rose to an uproar. The noise and the frenetic beat of the drums urged action. He had to do something. He would go to see Sepopa. Heavens, if only he had his revolver.

He dashed out into the courtyard of Sepopa's house. He could hear women chattering, but the compound was deserted. He peered within the house. Sepopa was not there. A dull glow from the smoldering fire upon the great crucifix distracted his attention. Never had he examined it closely. He walked up, dimly descrying the varnished inlay and the pitted holes of the jewel settings filled with dirt. The crucifix was bigger than he had imagined. It was fully seven feet high. Lightly he rapped on the stem. He started at the hollow sound. Good God, the jewels!

But his fingers found an aperture under the base. Ah, they had gone long since. He turned away, the emotion of disappointment finding a vent in anger at the interest the jewels had aroused.

The uproar continued; the high-pitched chant approached. From the courtyard he could see dim hurrying figures advancing. He hesitated. Reason told him that this was not the time to interview the chief excited by his people; dangerous perhaps to be caught alone near the great *ju-ju*. Dispiritedly he returned to the hut, growing angry afresh because the Mogwai had not returned. The chanting ceased.

The clamor died down to an excited jabbering and the occasional calling of one man to another. Time passed. His head ached, throbbing with those cursed drums. A mental image of the great lone tree draped in funereal tendrils began to obsess him. The Mogwai stood beside him. The flicker of the fire glinted upon something on her breast. He started up. It was the small crucifix. No need to ask if Miêville had been taken. The Mogwai was kneeling beside him, holding something in her cupped hands so that the light of the fire fell upon them.

"Tell me, oh, my man," she was saying, "what are these?"

A dull clot of red brought him to his knees in one convulsive movement. Lying in the Mogwai's palms were rubies as big as pigeon's eggs; and beside them, coldly blue, were sapphires, each as big as a quarter. For a moment the avarice that is in every human palsied his hand as he took them.

Good God, *there* was the motive. And the hollow crucifix? At a high tension his mind swept back along the line of memory records. Yes, on the night of the meat orgy when Sepopa, Mateka and Maruwi were drunk, Miêville had disappeared. No wonder he had been so anxious to leave immediately after. God in heaven. Of all the low-down treachery, unforgivable and . . . And he had wished to get rid of him, murder him for the sake of these baubles, rather than share them.

In a violent fit of rage Newman flung himself on to the couch of skins near to weeping, cursing Miêville incoherently. He swore that he would never move a finger to save him.

"But tell me, Amethlokadi," came the voice of the Mogwai, "of what are these?"

"Pebbles—pebbles," he replied wearily.

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"Pebbles which are congealed from the devil's heart."

X

WEARY and dispirited Newman broke himself struggling through a fungoid forest, petrified by a fact until exhaustion came to caress his eyelids. When the sun was full two spans above the roof cones he awoke to the rhythmic throb of drums, thirsty and cool veined. He sat up. The hut was empty. Then as the images of the preceding days rolled back like a foul gas cloud, he swore and sank upon his couch of skins.

The Mogwai entered bearing a calabash of beef tea. He took it, staring at her questioningly. Embarrassment possessed him; her love for him had a clear sapphire simplicity of nature which civilization had never stained with its sticky fingers. He rose and walked to the door. On the hot still air the drums throbbed like a fevered pulse, urging action, hysteric. He turned to the Mogwai with strained eyes.

"Is it not the night of the full moon?"

"Even so, Amethlokadi," she answered, watching him quietly.

He hesitated.

"Oh, Mogwai—oh, my woman, a favor I ask at thy hands. Save Monepi, my brother, from the death of the Great Feast!"

A controlled temper was drawn in every line of her supple body as she rose, the crucifix bathing in a ray of sunshine.

"Art thou still sick, oh, my man, that thou wouldst preserve the snake in the rafters? No man among all my peoples would stay the death of one who poisoned the meat-pot."

"Yea; that I know well, oh, little gazelle. But this is my will."

A wild glint came into her eyes as she answered angrily:

"In my desire for thee have I done that which thou wouldst have me to do. But the heart of the Black One is made sharper than a spear blade by Maruwi, the medicine-man, to whom revenge is sweeter than the honey of the country of the Mashukulumbwi; and the cry of the people for their meat is more savage than the roar of a lion whose belly sticketh to his ribs."

And she left him cold fleshed with the fate her words portended. Horror burned through his mind like the point of an icicle, freezing hate and revenge. Great God in heaven, he could never permit Miêville to suffer such a hellish doom. The treachery no longer existed; the man became a brother Christian and countryman. Reproaches barbed with Christian teaching showered upon him. Was he a disciple of red hate and black revenge? He saw himself frozen into a monster more hideous than the spirit of cannibalism.

Panic born of the realization of what he had been about to do, spurred him to frenzy. He rushed out into the courtyard. The Mogwai had gone. Where? To do what? At the gate squatted two warriors armed with barbed spears, sphinxlike. He began to pace the courtyard as violently as he had swung from the black pole of hate to the white pole of compassion, flapping madly, like a wild bird in a room, at the pane of impotence.

Desperate ideas darted across his darkening mind with the swiftness of swallows against a twilight sky: of fighting his way past those guards, with bare hands, to accomplish what?

What was he to do? What should he do? And to the pain of these stinging locusts beating on the face of his mind was the incessant pulse of the drums, each beat the portent of a stab of agony to come.

Once in the peregrination in which the subconscious sought to ease the mental pain by physical action he blundered into the hut and flung his body on the couch of skins, only to start up in nervous frenzy, his combined mind exploding in a kick at a calabash from which was spewed the jewels amid the embers of the fire. For a moment he stood motionless fascinated by the red eyes which glowed at him, luminous in the slanting ray of the sun. Then in that moment, welded by the hatred of the motive of the man to act the traitor, he saw symbolized in those stones the cynical eyes of avarice. Possessed by fury he strove to stamp them out of existence, a St. George who would slay the dragon, but as easily as evil slips from under the heel of the righteous, the stones shot from under Newman's heel, disappearing with a bloody wink into the blue shadows.

As gloriously remorseless as a lark's song upon a battle-field the sun set. In the tropic twilight, as passionately short as a lover's first caress, was thrust the nimbus

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of the moon above the violet feathers of the forest. Came a sudden frenzy of the drums, rasping yells from which stood out like the needles on a cactus, the shrill prolonged shrieks of women. Hysteric fingers plucked at the harp strings of his emotions. A wild desire to scream with laughter, to weep and to dance embraced him. A shadow in the door startled him. The Mogwai stood there.

"I would look once more upon the face of Monepi," he said in a throttled voice.

There was a restless gleam in her eyes as she looked at him.

"Be it so, oh, my man," she answered. "Come thou!"

He shrank. The Mogwai laid fingers upon his arm which quivered.

"Come thou!" she said again, vibrantly.

HE FOLLOWED her in a sense of nightmare, striving to wake to feasible action. At the entrance she dismissed the guard with an imperious gesture. With nervous, eager steps they hastened through the deserted village, almost running to the pulse of the drums; out across the open ground along the river bank beneath a western sky of sapphire where the stars made pale obeisance to the magic of the moon.

As they approached a large ant hill Newman turned nervously at a sound behind him.

"Inkoos!" came Jaha's deep voice, "I have followed thee lest thou hast need of me."

Newman made a hopeless gesture. The Mogwai led him to the ant hill upon which the three lay down, peering 'round the conical top. Half in the shadow of the great lone tree, against which the mystic blue of the forest appeared like a cowled colossus, its giant crown haloed in silver thorns of moonlight, sat Sepopa upon his stool of state. Before him was a mass of dim, twitching phantoms of blue. On tufted spears flickered stars of yellow from an irregular line of fires. In a stooping shuffling dance, the men crooned a chant; the women, moving in an opposite direction, screamed shrilly at every half minute.

Straining his eyes Newman could see no sign of Miêville; yet in the belly of the cowled tree was a ghostly gleam, uncertain. A phantom born of expectancy or—what? The dance continued monotonously; 'round and 'round circled the men and women. On a sudden the circles broke, merged into an indistinguishable mass and as quickly formed into a ragged line of warriors, their chief as the center point. The drums ceased abruptly. The silence was appalling. A misguided cock crew. With a rippling splash the drums recommenced, a slow five-second beat, inhibiting effort.

A tenor voice chanting was chorused by a thudding crash of spear against shield, feet against earth, and a tremendous shout *"Ow-ough!"* shot through by the shrill screaming of the women. In the welling moonlight the mass of limbs, flashing eyes, spears glinting in the flickering fire glow, the slow funereal beat of the drums and the terrific thundering warrior chorus, contracted the heart valves and individualized every hair.

A warrior, springing out from the ruck, would crouch behind his shield before Sepopa, give a mighty leap, throwing sand in the air; then a rush, a stabbing action, a pantomime of fierce fight, triumph and capture of the enemy's women. On a sudden the drums changed their rhythm to a crescendo; ceased and worked up again. Faster beat the drums; louder screamed the women; higher leaped the warriors.

The Mogwai's arm tightened about him as Newman, nearly uncontrollable with the hysteric excitement and horror, half rose. Then a scream died on his lips as the rising moon threw an oblique eye into the belly of the cowled colossus revealing the white body of Miêville bound to the great crucifix.

Sepopa had discarded his stool and reclined upon a pile of skins a few yards from the victim. A case of Newman's brandy was beside him. Persistently he raised a bottle, swallowing neat spirit. As Newman watched, paralyzed with horror, a band of warriors, racing forward, threw themselves face downward before the crucified victim; then springing to their feet they began to caper and leap in the Dance of Death.

Suddenly Maruwi, his cock feathers silhouetted, snatched a brand from the fire. Newman rose, blaspheming unconsciously, as he thought he saw the face contort at the impact of the fire to the body. The constriction of horror held him as well as the lithe arms of the Mogwai about his knees.

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Sepopa in drunken frenzy threw a bottle at the nearest fire, scattering the embers in a ruddy shower. The ivory bangles gleamed in the moonlight as he showed his teeth in laughter. Attempting to rise, he fell upon his back where he lay kicking his ponderous limbs, sprawling like an elephantine baby. Rapidly the fiendish three led by Maruwi circled and leaped before the doomed man; louder roared the warrior chorus; still more frenziedly beat the drums.

Suddenly one slashed at the abdomen with a spear. A bloody gash remained.

"God! they're going to mutilate him!" screamed Newman.

A red mist enveloped the central figure and capering phantoms. A rigor seized him.

XII

UNARMED and weak, reason had failed. Then came the divine: the subconscious took control.

Girded with the strength of rhythmic exaltation he tore himself free from the arms of the Mogwai and Jaha; with a sudden wrench had snatched the small crucifix from about her neck, and was running with the speed of a hartbeest across the open.

And at that figure, bearded, ghostly, holding aloft a crucifix which glittered in the full moonlight, they shrank back, their cries stilled as the vision spread from eye to eye. Waves of panic ran like puffs of wind over a cornfield. Slowly stalked the strange priest bearing the ivory Christ toward the sacrificial tree. The drums wavered and stopped. They fled, men and women.

Maruwi and Mateka, turning at the silence, beheld. The third warrior's scream of terror struck them. They ran, leaping over the drunken Sepopa.

Then Newman, barely conscious of how he came there, still exalted, was aware of the Mogwai beside him beneath the tendrils of the great tree; and as he looked, the man upon the cross smiled gently down.

With a spear they cut his bonds; and with the Mogwai and Jaha aiding they hurried to the river. As the ivory figure of Miêville crawled into a canoe, Newman turned to the Mogwai. Her face was hidden in the mane of hair which rippled blue shadows, but he heard her murmur—

"With thee I come, oh, Eyes-Like-the-Sky!"

And to the scared eyes of Maruwi peering from the forest a lambent cross flitted like a will-o'-the-wisp across the misty waters and went out in blue shadows.

THE FLYING SQUADRON

by CHARLES C. JONES

SUMMER noon or Winter midnight, blowing dark or cloudless sky,
There's a siren streaks the distance and "Eighteen" goes swinging by;
Fireboys clutching coats and helmets—belted gentlemen of chance,
Swinging ax or wielding nozzle where death's flaring vanguards dance.

Comes to hard-won pause the summons: "Boys, a woman's trapped up there!"
Then the ladders leap to rescue, and a man has gone to dare;
Strangling, blinded, fighting forward, every inch the proof of strife;
Till he brings her down the ladder back to hope and love and life.

Well they know their Flying Squadron—not a quitter in the crew!
But they do not talk heroics, save of deeds that others do.
Oh, they take it as they get it, falling wall or cellar murk—
Just smoke-eaters out and at it—and they call it daily work!

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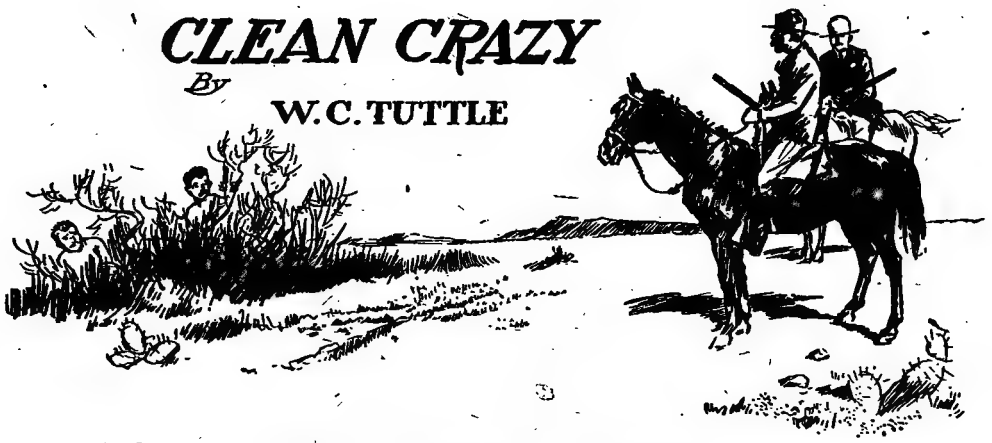
CLEAN CRAZY

By W. C. TUTTLE



Author of "Muley's Morals," "Salt of the Earth," etc.

"CLEANLINESS is next to godliness, Hen," orates Telescope Tolliver, trying to stick up hu razor slash on his face with some cigaret paper. "Uh feller ought to take uh bath once uh week whether he needs it or not. Uh course I don't mean that yuh ought to rub all the cuticle loose, but uh nice refreshing bath, taken in uh gentlemanly manner don't hurt nobody."

"That's nice to listen to, Telescope," says I. "Cleanliness is uh hy-iu state of uh affairs, but when uh feller has to absorb said cleanliness from uh wash-basin and uh dirty towel, it sort uh loses its girlish charms.

"The last time I gets dudish thataway Muley Bowles comes along and gets his big feet into that basin. I've only got as far down as my ears, and there ain't no water left, so I proclaims uh drouth on the lower part uh my system and lets her go at that. I'd give three cheers to know who honed this razor. If Chuck don't get rid uh them corns uh his pretty soon we'll all have to grow whiskers on our faces. What's all this here talk about baths about, Telescope?"

"Uh man ought to go clean to uh dance, Hen," he proclaims. "Being as there's going to be uh sprinkling of the fair sex at the Seven A shindig it ain't no more than right that we sloughs off uh little real estate and smells more like uh rose. I hates to shave this early, but if Muley and Chuck ever starts to get dolled up for uh dance there ain't never going to be no chance for uh civilized man to get prepared. We'll get most all ready, except the per-fume, Hen, and then they can have it all to themselves, eh?"

"Speaking uh baths," says I.

Telescope smokes hard on his cigaret, and grins at me.

"Hen," says he, reminiscent like, "did you admire the swimming-hole when you was uh kid?"

"I'd tell uh man," says I. "Why, dog-gone it, Telescope, I re——"

"Fine," says he, still grinning. "About half-way between here and Paradise, down there where Tin Cup Crick makes that elbow turn, there's uh swimming-hole that was sure built to order. I discovered it the other day, when I hazes uh cow across."

"Too close to the road," I objects. "Anybody going along the road could look right over there."

"Naw. Bushes all along the bank. You'd have to stand up in uh wagon to see the water uh tall, Hen. Let's me and you go down there and have uh good old swim. What do yuh say, eh?"

"Here they are, Muley!" yells Chuck Warner from the doorway. "You guard the window while I hangs uh rope on 'em, and we'll split the reward."

"Being funny is an art, Chuck," states Telescope, dangling uh pair uh green neckties in his hands. "There's always something pitiful about the funny stuff you say. What are you and that animated can uh goose-grease trying to start around here?"

"Goose-grease, eh?" yelps Muley Bowles from the window, where his face looms up like uh milk-cheese. "You long, limber-jointed cross between uh surveyor's chain and uh razor-backed hawg—you!"

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"Well, spring it," I advises. "Let's all laugh."

"Haw! Haw! Haw!" whoops Chuck. "You'll laugh all right, Hen. Sheriff McFee was taking uh couple uh crazy men up to Warm Springs from Red Lodge last night. He had them two hombres in the express car, where their language won't offend nobody—and drummers, and when it gets dark they opines that they desires to sleep. McFee humors them by letting 'em take off their clothes.

"Well, pretty soon they seems to get uh longing for the free and open pe-rairie, so they busts McFee over the head with uh crate uh aigs, piles uh heavy trunk on the messenger, and hits the cactus near Paradise, with nothing on their bodies or minds.

"Also they takes McFee's and the messenger's six-shooters. McFee arrives in Paradise with aigs in his hair and malice in his heart. He offers uh hundred dollars reward for information that will corral the aig-busters. I'd opine that them nude nuts will be hard to take alive."

"Uh man, with nothing on his mind
And nothing on his legs,
Who hits the county sheriff
With uh case uh ancient aigs,
Then pilgrims out in cactus land
To take uh little sleep
Hadn't ought to be arrested;
He should be herding sheep."

Muley recites with his face through the window.

I don't reckon that Muley could help orating poetry if he wanted to. He tips the hay-scales at two hundred and forty, rides the biggest saddle-tree in the State, and constantly lives in hope that his past is forgotten, and that he can learn to spin uh rope without balling it up.

Telescope Tolliver was built after uh pole-bean pattern. He ducks every time he enters the door, and rides with short stirrups so his feet won't drag. His past is closely linked with Muley's, and the less said about it the better. Telescope insists that he's originally from Kentucky—the Tollivers of Kentucky, with the accent on "the." Telescope sings. Some folks sings by music and some by ear, but Telescope sings by main strength.

Chuck Warner has banty legs on uh man-sized body, face like uh bronc, and ability to tell uh lie and stick to it. He wiggles his ears like uh burro, looks trusting out of uh pair uh innocent blue eyes, and sings—when somebody don't stop him.

Me? I'm Hen Peck. I was born in Missouri and showed in Montana. I ain't so awful to look at and I got uh lot uh natural sense. I sure can make uh banjo set up and take notice; and also can sing uh little. I'm to be described as having uh sympathetic disposition and warts on both hands. I'm unlucky. If I hadn't uh started to punch cows for uh living I might uh made uh mark in the world, but no matter if I had, somebody would have come along and rubbed it out.

Right now this unholy quartet is drawing down forty and board from the Cross J outfit, owned and cussed at by old man Whittaker, christened Ephriham. Any one wishing to correspond with me can send it to any one of us, care of the Cross J ranch, Yellow Rock County, Montana. It don't make no difference who yuh address the letter to—the other three will get it sooner or later.

"Lucky thing that you and Muley had your clothes on, Chuck," says I. "That's all the alibi yuh had. How long did it take you and Muley to frame up uh lie like that?"

"It ain't no lie, Hennery," replies Muley. "McFee is getting up uh posse right now."

"Why didn't you fellers go with him?" asks Telescope. "They say it takes uh thief to catch uh thief: why not uh nut to catch a nut? Like attracts like."

Me and Telescope dodges two pair uh boots, and arrives outside intact.

"LET'S go swimming," says Telescope, and we did just that thing. That swimming-hole was built to order, and we can't hardly wait to get our clothes off. I reckon it's about uh hundred in the shade, and believe me that water did feel good to little Henry Clay Peck, Esq.

We dives off the bank and disports like uh pair uh muskrats. After we ducks each other uh couple uh times, like uh pair uh kids, Telescope shakes the water out of his ears and says:

"Hen, them broncs look uh heap dry and hot, don't yuh think? Suppose we gives 'em uh bath, too?"

"Not for mine," says I. "That saddle cost me too much coin and I don't take no chance on having it curl up. Sabe?"

"Huh!" he snorts. "I reckon it would hurt yuh uh lot to ride bareback, wouldn't

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it? We can take off the saddles and bridles and use hackamores. That'll be more than we got on. What yuh say?"

I didn't say. I climbs right out and begins to take off my rig. I'm riding uh big Lazy Y roan, with just enough sense in its head to cause it to eat. Telescope's is uh brown outlaw, which displays uh Cross-in-uh-Box brand and uh wicked-looking eye. We climbs on and forces 'em into the water. It's deep enough to make 'em swim, and we starts 'em to milling right in the middle of the crick.

Sudden like my bronc lets out uh snort like uh scared buck and paws for the bank, and Telescope's brown is right against me, snorting like uh freight engine on uh grade.

I gets one look as we hits the bank, and sees the cause of all the fright. Goats! Dozens of goats. High up on the other bank I glimpses uh dilapidated figure, which I recognizes as being "Harelip" Hansen.

Harelip used to be uh cowman, but some rustlers busted up his herd. Then he went into sheep over on another range just in time to get mixed up in the sheep and cattle trouble, and his sheep paid the penalty of his sins. He opines that nobody is going to hurt uh goat so he invests in uh small herd.

I never saw two broncs take such uh dislike to goats as them two did. Me and Telescope are all slick from that water, and the broncs are wet, too, so yuh can imagine the chance we had to hold 'em with hackamores.

We went up that bank like two streaks, over to the main road, and away we goes to Paradise hell-bent-for-election.

"Ho-ho-hold that —— roan down!" yells Telescope, laying back on his bronc's hips, and sawing with both hands.

"Hold ——!" I yells right back at him. "How can I hold mine while yours acts thataway?"

I pulls on my bronc until I ain't got uh pull left in my carcass, but the harder I pulls the faster he runs, with Paradise only three miles away.

I looks back after a while and sees Telescope riding sideways and slapping his bronc on the side of its head, trying to turn it out of the road, but that outlaw is so scared that it don't even shake its head.

I'm simply raining sweat and profanity when Telescope forges up beside me and yells in uh scared voice—

"Team coming!"

I takes uh looks down the sandy road, and here comes uh wagon-load uh folks. I can see colors, so I knows that there's females aboard.

"What yuh going to do?" I yells, looking back, but I gets uh demonstration instead of an answer.

Telescope hops high in the air, away from his bronc, and spills end over end into that hot dust.

I takes another look at that wagon and follers suit. I lights setting down, and I reckon I'd uh set there too long if the sand hadn't been so hot. I looks around and finds that the only bit uh cover is uh mesquite bush back about uh hundred yards where Telescope had lit.

You can talk all you like about sprinters who can make the hundred yards in nine and four-fifths, but I made that in four-fifths flat, and it wasn't no cinder path either. It was ankle-deep hot sand, but I spurns it like uh bird, slides under the bush, wraps my arms around the roots and sticks my head into Telescope's stummick.

"Oof!" says Telescope, patting himself on the belt-buckle. "*Mff-arr-guff-oof!*"

"Yes," says I, "it sure is some sultry."

"My ——!" he explodes, after he gets through swallering his discomfort. "The shade is on the wrong side, Hen!"

Just then the wagon rattles past, and we sees that in it is Weinie Lopp and uh couple uh women. We angles around the bushes as they goes past and hears 'em talking about them crazy men.

"What'll the officers do if they do see 'em?" asks uh female.

"Well, ma'am, they'll just about have to shoot first and ask questions afterward," replies Weinie. "They can't afford to take no chances in uh case like this."

The wagon rattles on and me and Telescope gets around on the shady side.

"This shade ain't much but it's better than nothing," states Telescope. "Now I reckon—look out! Here comes another wagon."

We ducks back into the sun again and sizzles while that wagon goes on to Paradise. I never noticed before how slow uh team uh horses can be.

As soon as they're out uh range we goes back to the shade, but right away comes uh couple uh girls on horseback, and we has to enter the fiery furnace again.

I reckon that dust is the invention of the

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devil to make men sneeze at uh time like this, but I couldn't help it. Right when they're opposite us I simply has to cut loose and sneeze like uh confirmed hay-feverist.

It scares one uh them broncs and it bolts right toward us, and uh course Telescope has to stand up. Blooey!

One of them horses goes right on up the road, but the other sunfishes, and its rider lights high wide and handsome in her floppy skirt. She sets there slapping the dust out of her eyes and making little squeaky noises, while me and Telescope goes off across country like uh couple uh skinned coyotes looking for uh place to hole up.

Hot? Say, I can just feel the lard oozing out uh my carcass, and as we tops uh hog-back ridge Telescope stops long enough to pant:

"Huh-huh-huh-Hen, we're in uh-uh-uh nice fix! There—huh-uh-huh—uh—comes the posse."

"Let 'em come," I wheezes. "I can't run another foot. What do we care—nothing but men."

"Like ——!" he gulps. "They—huh-uh—huh—picked up them females."

DID I say I couldn't run another foot? I lied about my ability. Did yuh ever run across country without no clothes on your anatomy? No, uh course yuh never did. That's uh privilege that is accorded to uh select few.

Uh cactus gets stuck on your heel, flies from there up to some choice part of your carcass and takes uh grip that calls for pinchers and heroic action.

Before me and Telescope had hit Tin Cup Crick we looks like uh pair uh full-fledged porkypines. We flops down in the thick brush before the posse shows up, and rolls and wheezes our lungs full of air.

"My ——!" wails Telescope. "I'm all stuck to thunder. The end uh my nose is the only place where there ain't no stickers and that's only because it was too far in front. Here comes the posse, Hen! Thank God for these bushes!"

We lays low and waits for 'em to come close. Sudden like we hears uh noise, and Harelip Hansen comes down through the brush and breaks out into the open. We can't see him now, but pretty soon we hears voices and we opines that he's conversing with the posse.

"Zhure I zeen um," we hears Harelip proclaim. "In zwimmin'."

"Which way did they go?" we hears McFee ask, and then: "Uh-huh. I thought so. Must uh been the same ones that tackled these ladies. Mighty lucky thing we came along when we did. Yuh never can tell about uh crazy man. I reckon we'll have to kill 'em."

"Did they have any guns?" asks somebody.

"Yes," we hears uh female reply. "Yes, they were heavily armed. They surely were a savage-looking pair, weren't they, Mable? I honestly thought my last hour had come."

"Indeed, yes," we hears the other one reply. "They surely were a desperate-looking pair. One of them tried to overtake me."

Telescope kicks me on the ankle, thereby joining us together through the medium of uh healthy prickly-pear.

"Ouch!" groans Telescope. "Deliver me from all women."

"That woman ain't lying," I states. "She believes that them things actually happened. Anyway you are uh desperate-looking hombre—nude thataway, Telescope."

"Don't argue shapes with me, Hennery Peck," he hisses. "You'd make uh good model for uh cross between uh sack uh sand and uh pretzel. You ain't nude, Hen. You couldn't never be nude—not with your present physique—you're naked as ——!"

"Well," we hears some of the posse say: "It's uh cinch they ain't going to come and invite us to put uh rope on 'em, so we better be moving on."

After they leaves us we gets busy on cactus spines. We manages to get the worst ones out of our legs, and then starts crawling through the brush in the general direction of our clothes. They say that curiosity killed uh cat, but no cat was ever born with curiosity that uh range steer can show at times.

You can ride all around him on uh bronc and he won't pay no attention 'cause he sort uh figures, I reckon, that the man is part of the horse, but you let uh steer see uh man on foot, and he immediate and soon wishes to investigate.

This long, rangy red steer that me and Telescope crawls up against in them bushes gets scared of uh year's growth when

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he sees two nude specimens. He lets out uh bawl like his sun was about to set, and paws his way up uh washout, where he stands and gawps at us, with his tongue hanging out uh foot.

"Don't move!" I whispers. "Stand perfectly still and he'll think we're part of the scenery."

"I'm uh cactus," states Telescope, and then he imitates one to perfection by stooping over to pull uh thorn from between his toes.

That settled things for that steer. The minute that Telescope imitates uh cactus bending in the breeze the steer gets uh longing for uh nice piece uh juicy cactus, and he immediate and soon comes right down to see if we're of the edible variety. He sticks his red head down, sticks his tail up, puts uh kink in it, and orates aloud that he's uh committee to find out things.

Me and Telescope didn't linger longer. There ain't nothing in sight that looks like uh safe place to be, so we goes off across country regardless of contour or description, and that committee uh one red steer pilgrims in our wake.

We acquires more cactus in our journeys, also numerous and sundry bruises from mesquite prongs and rocks. We sure lead uh care-free and aimless existence for the next few minutes. Telescope leads by one jump, and about uh hop and uh bawl behind yours truly comes that Seven A critter. Every little while it lets out uh warning that the worst is yet to come, and we shoves the speed up another notch.

The speed limit uh human endurance is about reached in my system, when I sees Telescope throw up his skinny arms and drop out uh sight through uh fringe uh brush, and the next fraction of uh second finds me doing the same.

I drops through space for uh second or two, and then: *glub!* I lands all sprawled out in uh pot-hole with alkali mud in the bottom. I reckon that steer tries to stop on the edge, but he skids around and comes down the bank rear end first, right into our midst and mud.

I gets uh wallop that stands me on my head up against that sticky bank, and when I gets my perceptions to working again, I observes that steer flat on its side in the bottom of that pot-hole with Telescope setting on its head.

The hole is only about twenty feet across the bottom, and the sides slope sharp to the rim, which is about twenty feet away. The steer is making funny noises with its nose in the mud, and Telescope's head droops like uh wilted flower, while he pants and puffs like uh winded pup. I puffs uh little and rubs some mud out uh my eyes.

"Sus-sus-some bulldogger—me," stutters Telescope, spitting out uh gob uh alkali mud.

"More like uh Mexican hairless dogger," says I. "I sure gives yuh credit for leading that misguided piece uh beef into uh cul-de-sac."

"Cul de ——!" he groans, looking at the top of the bank. "I lead him all right, but how am I going to leave him?"

"Get him by the tail and throw him out," I advises. "You always could throw the bull, Telescope."

"Funny, ain't yuh?" he snaps, sarcastic like. "Maybe that's uh better idea than you thought it would be. Out uh the mouth uh fools often cometh wisdom. We'll both get him by the tail and then it's uh cinch he can't hook us."

"And he's too wise to starve to death, and will have to leave here sooner or later," says I. "You set there until I gets uh good grip."

I GRABS that tail in uh death grip, braces my feet in the mud, and notifies Telescope that he can get up and hook on. For the next few seconds there is something doing. That animile immediate and soon gets on his feet in that slippery, yaller mud, and digs deep into his soul for sounds to tell how mad and scared he is.

He tries to change ends but the anchor is too much of uh drag, so he lets out an extra bawl for good measure and bores straight for the rim.

We're with him in spirit and in fact, and the three of us flops back on to good going in record time. Preferring uh stern chase we encourages that steer to keep going, and you can take it from me, uh steer can run.

I'm hanging on to its tail near the rump and Telescope is out on the extreme end, and we bumps, whips and bounds across country like two tin cans on the tail of uh wolf.

I'm ready to quit pretty soon, but I ain't in no position to drop off first, being as I'm

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sort of in front, so I tries to yell loud enough for Telescope to hear—

"Let go!"

I thought he had taken my advice, so I slaps that steer uh parting wallop with my free hand and lets go with the other. I was mistaken. I reckon that Telescope must uh taken uh half-hitch on that tail, 'cause when I lets loose I gets run into so danged hard that I turns flip-flops and chases stars for fifty feet out of our line uh march.

I'm laying there taking uh star census, when I hears uh voice proclaim from the brush below me:

"I hope he got killed! Dang his hide!"

"Me and you both," says I, right back at him. "I hates red steers worse than ——!"

Telescope Tolliver raises his bony physique into my line uh vision and looks me over.

"Henry Clay Peck, I didn't mean the steer," he states. "What did yuh let loose for? You busted my wishbone—dang yuh!"

"There's luck in busted wishbones," says I. "If your heart ain't too full uh malice I wish you'd come up here and take uh few prickly pears out uh me—I want to set down. Where's the steer?" I asks, as Telescope imitates uh windmill, trying to shake uh prickly pear out of his thumb.

"Dang his red hide—I don't know! I don't care! If he ain't slowed up none he's in Canada by now. My gosh, I'm fit for uh hospital!"

"And you're all dirty, too, Telescope. Uh bath don't do some folks any good. Anyway we sure are having some holiday, wild and free thisaway. What'll we do now that'll be painfully funny? After all this I could laugh myself sick at uh lynching."

"We'll go over and get our clothes, Hen," he states. "I'm all through with this here cave-man stuff. My cripes, that water will feel good on these cuts and bruises, eh?"

We limps across that burning sands like two naked souls in the losing end of the hereafter, and after hunting every bit uh cover on the way, we finally hits the bank uh Tin Cup again. We splashes around for uh while and then climbs the bank where we left our clothes.

"There!" says Telescope. "That water sure felt good, eh, Hen? There ain't no use talking, clothes sure do make the—what the ——!"

"Gone!" says I, vacant like. "Somebody stole 'em."

We looks over the place where we left our habiliments of civilization, but all that's left is half uh Telescope's hat, one saddle-blanket and the two saddles and bridles.

"Nobody stole 'em," proclaims Telescope, pointing at the cut-up ground. "See what took 'em, Hen? Goats! The sons-uh-guns done ate half uh my hat, too!"

"I hope the souls of all departed goats will haunt Harelip Hansen all the rest of his danged life!" I pronounces.

"Haunts ——!" howls Telescope. "Butts, you mean. Who cares about goat ghosts?"

We sets down there and contemplates our condition. Telescope picks up that saddle-blanket and tries to make uh breech-cloth for himself but he's got too many cactus spines in that part of his anatomy, so he throws it away and puts on that half uh hat.

"From your eyebrows on up you're civilized," says I. "But what's the use—nobody's going to look at your face."

"Aw ——!" he wails. "We got to get home, so we might as well start now as any time."

"We can't take the road," I objects. "We're liable to run into uh posse any time, and besides that there's uh danged lot uh travel on this road today. If we had clothes on we'd never meet anybody, but it seems like when yuh gets naked yuh got to pass uh pee-rade all the time."

"No, we're not using roads this season, Mister Peck," says he. "Roads were built for civilized folks. We'll pilgrim up Sillman Gulch to the forks, sneak over the top through them cottonwoods, and work our way home down that gully back of the bunkhouse."

"We might visit Miss Emily and Genevieve on our way," I suggests.

Them two is the Mudgett sisters. They lives with their brother, Abe Mudgett, who is away right now. Them two is twins, and if there ever was two homelier women on earth they never showed up in this State. Them two old maids don't need no protector, 'cause it's uh cinch that nothing will ever attack 'em in the daylight.

"Uh-huh," agrees Telescope. "We sure are dressed for uh call. I don't reckon that Solomon in all his glory would attract the attention that me and you would."

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We sneaks across the road and hits the brush up the gulch. After we've gone about half uh mile, we hears voices, and sees several people ride across the gulch above us. We drops low in the brush, as two fellers ride close by us, and we hears one of 'em opine:

"They can't get far, that's uh cinch. Believe me, I don't take no chances on them kind uh Jaspers. Things like this is what scares women plumb stiff. I reckon all the men in the country are on their trail."

Telescope looks foolish like at me and digs some hardened mud out of his ear.

"That's cheerful news for to hear, Hennery," says he.

"Yes," says I. "I ain't been cheered so much since uh doctor took one look at me and said, 'Smallpox.' I reckon we might as well keep going. I'd as soon be killed near the ranch as out here in the brush."

We listens uh while and then sneaks on up the gulch. About uh quarter of uh mile further on we slips into sight of the Mudgett house, which is only uh short distance from the bottom of the gulch.

We sets there and watches the place for uh while but there don't seem to be any sign uh life. The door is shut and the blinds are down.

"Nobody there," says I. "Let's go on, Telescope."

"Hen, ain't you got no sabe in your system?" he asks. "Look at the washing on the line over there."

I looks and beholds two pair of overalls and some female apparel, hanging there on uh line, stretched from the house to the barn, and it warms my heart like wine.

"Telescope," says I, "you got Sherlock Holmes out on uh limb. The trunk is open and nobody home. Let's go cover our shame."

WE EASES ourselves out of the brush, and skips across that open space with joy in our souls, and when we're about half-way across we turns and goes right back to the brush with bird-shot in our hides. It sure was uh reversal of form.

"Ambushed!" wails Telescope, as we falls under cover and picks at them stinging spots.

"No argument," says I, picking uh number seven shot out uh my hide and rolling it in my hand. "There's always uh silver lining though, Telescope."

"For instance?"

"Well," says I, holding out that little piece uh lead. "We might uh been uh lot closer, for one thing, and they might uh had uh thirty-thirty."

Zee-e-e-e! Zing-g-g-g-g! Boom! Boom!

Two more loads uh shot invades our sanctuary, and causes us to hug each other. Uh course we're about out uh range, but them shot has still got enough ambition to bring tears to our eyes.

"Dang uh woman!" wails Telescope. "They can't see us but they got imagination enough to hit us just the same."

"Well, they ain't going to hit me no more," says I. "Little Henry Clay Peck ain't going to expose his sylph-like form to no more shotguns."

I wiggles off through the brush and Telescope is with me.

"Where yuh going?" he asks.

"I'm going to hole up over here in the thick brush and there ain't nothing short of uh cloud-burst or uh fire going to pry me loose until it gets dark. Sabe?"

"I wish we had some way to tell 'em that we ain't the ones," complains Telescope.

"Well, we ain't. Uh course I know and you know that we ain't crazy, Telescope, but there ain't no use telling it to somebody at uh hundred yards when they got uh gun. Nobody in this country ever seen us running around naked thisaway, so yuh can't blame 'em if they don't recognize us at uh glance. I'm sure going to lie silent until darkness covers this troubled land. Everybody'll be at the dance, so we'll have uh cinch."

We lays there nursing our wounds, sunburn and scratches, and praying for uh smoke until it gets dark.

Then out we pilgrims and turns our swollen feet toward the Cross J. We picks up prickly pears at every step, and our progress is profanely audible. We're sore and stiff, and that night air ain't what you'd designate as being tropical.

"Cleanliness may be next to godliness, Telescope, but this is the most ungodly bath I ever had," says I. "Every time I thinks of the old swimming-hole I'm going to think of cactus, scared broncs, wild steers, bird-shot, irresponsible women and goats. This is what uh feller gets for trying to smell like uh rose. After this I takes my bath in sections. Never again

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do I remove my clothes. I don't reckon I got uh spot the size of uh two-bit piece on my carcass what ain't injured in some way."

"Them is my sentiments, Hen," groans Telescope. "Never again do I be so dudish that I takes two baths in one day."

We pilgrims on through the dark and swings out through the willers back of the bunk-house.

We sees somebody light uh match on the porch of the ranch-house, but there ain't no beacon out to guide us home. We sneaks around to the bunk-house door and finds it locked tight. The window is nailed down.

"Locked out!" wails Telescope, in uh whisper. "After all this suffering we finds that we ain't even welcome at home. What'll we do now, Hen?"

"I'll tell yuh what. We'll sneak up to the back of the house, open the window to the old man's room and get some uh his clothes. We got to be danged quiet 'cause there's somebody on the front porch."

We crawls around behind the house, and up to the old man's window. Lucky for us the window ain't fastened, so we pushes it up like two experienced burglars.

Telescope slides his lanky frame over the sill into the dark, and I'm right behind him.

"How are we going to get uh light?" I asks, in uh whisper.

"Cinch," he whispers. "I know where the old man keeps his matches."

He fumbles around in the dark for uh minute and then gives uh satisfied grunt.

"Got 'em, by gosh!"

Then he strikes uh match, and holds it up. Here we are standing in the middle uh that big room, like two naked souls, holding uh light for all to see.

"My ——!" gasps Telescope and me together, and that match still burns merrily on.

There's three beds in the room; and from each bed rises the figure of two females. They got curler things on their heads and horror in their eyes.

One of 'em makes uh noise like uh little chicken calling for its maw, and then all is silent again.

"——!" snorts Telescope, when that match burns down and nips his fingers, and we're in darkness again.

I've heard some noises in my time, but that bunch uh females can make more separate and distinct noises in uh short space uh time than anything I ever heard.

We hears somebody cuss out on the porch, and then me and Telescope meets at the window, and both tries to go out together. The theory was all wrong. We might uh made it in single file but not in uh bunch thataway. We claws at that window in the dark, with female screams spurring us on, but all we managed to do was to shut the danged thing.

I drops to the floor and rolls under uh bed, and I feels that Telescope is right with me. Them females is in the last stages of hysterics when the door opens and in comes the old man and Muley Bowles.

I RECKON the old man is carrying uh lamp, but all I can see is their boots, and the muzzles of two rifles.

"They were here!" yelps uh female, and the noise starts all over again.

"Wait uh minute!" howls the old man. "Shut up and give me uh chance to get head or tail to all this noise. Do yuh mean to say that them crazy men was in this room?"

"I seen 'em!" yelps uh female. "They lit uh match. Must have come in the window."

"——!" snorts the old man. "Somebody sure must be crazy. The window is shut."

"Sherlock Holmes again," I whispers, pinching Telescope on the leg.

"*Yeow-w-w-w!*"

What I thought was Telescope wasn't him—not any! It was uh female, who, following her natural impulse, went under the bed for safety. Anyway she sure went out from under there like uh streak, and lights right into the multitude.

"Oh-o-o-o-o!" she yelps. "Something bit me!"

"Dog," pronounces the old man. "That Airedale will bite. Here, Booze! Come on out, you whiskered cow-chaser! Come out uh that! Well stay there then—I don't blame yuh!"

"Make uh noise like uh Airedale, Hen," comes uh strangled whisper from the other bed, and I knows that Telescope is still with me.

"What seems to be the trouble?" asks uh voice at the door, and we recognizes it as belonging to Chuck Warner. "What's all the fuss about?"

"These here ladies opines that them

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crazy men invades their sanctuary uh while ago," replies the old man, and Chuck roars.

"Haw! Haw! Haw! Did, eh? Well, well! Somebody sure must be seeing things. Them two fellers never got off that train. They went out of that express car, but they just crawled on top of the coach and they caught 'em at Warm Springs. McFee just got uh wire, telling all about it."

There ain't uh word said for some time, and then the old man busts loose:

"Gol dingle dang uh woman! Here we got the whole danged country aroused and hunting for something what ain't! Making uh female refuge out uh my house! Ain't that uh —— of uh note? Chuck, you hitch up and take some uh these females home, and Muley can take the rest. Take 'em home, take 'em to the dance or any other danged place they wants to go. Get 'em away from the Cross J.

"Gol dingle dang! Don't know uh coyote from uh naked man. Gosh A'mighty, woman, why don't yuh study physiology and learn the human shape. Harelip Hansen ain't no better, but yuh can't blame him—he's uh goat-herder. Dang everybody!"

They all leaves, while the old man fusses and splutters, and when there ain't nobody left in sight me and Telescope hauls our weary carcasses out from under and sets down on uh bed. We looks foolish like at each other, and just then the old man walks back into the room, still spluttering.

He shuts the door before he sees us. He's just lighting his pipe, and when he sees us he stops dead still, leans against the wall, weak like, throws his pipe on the floor and puffs solemn like on that match.

"——!" he gasps. "I might—uh—knowed — that — Chuck —lied — about — that—telegram!" and just then Muley sticks his head inside the door.

"Say, are you—holy—suffering—cinch-rings!"

He looks us over with eyes the size uh two-bit pieces, and then begins to shake like uh sack uh jelly. He gets his breath after awhile, and examines us some close like, and recites:

"They roamed the prairie wild and free
Without uh single stitch.
They gathered cactus with their feet
And got the dobie itch.
They scared the women all to ——,
And bathed in alkali.
They had no brains—so crazy men
Had to prove their alibi."

"You fellers expect to get to that dance?" asks the old man, still sucking on that match. "You both better take uh bath and ——"

"You answer him, Telescope," says I. "I ain't got the heart."

"No," says Telescope. "Uh man what ain't got no more sense than to give uh man advice like that ain't worth answering."

"You fellers can't go to no dance with all that mud—" begins Muley, but Telescope rises to his full height, and sets his jaws hard.

"Shut up! Me and Hen may be crazy but we ain't clean crazy! From now on I'm going to keep my hat on when I washes my face. How about you, Hen?"

"Me? Telescope, I'll raise your ante uh little. From now on I'm going to wear gloves when I washes my hands."

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"U.S.A"

BY

GORDON YOUNG

Author of "Gaboreau," "The Unlisted Legion," etc.

NOW THE battle of Manila had been won.

Two young ensigns stood before the admiral in his cabin on the *Olympia*.

They disliked and distrusted each other as much as men can without showing their feeling. The grudge was old. It dated from Annapolis, but the climax had come only a few days before. There had been a misunderstanding as to orders turned over by Morgan, the junior ensign, when Randolph had relieved him on the bridge while the fleet was on its way from Hongkong.

The misunderstanding was of such a nature as to have possibly imperiled the entire naval force of their country in the Orient. Randolph was confident that it had been done *deliberately* by Morgan. It was a hideous thing to think of a fellow officer, but Randolph thought it; though he had not said so. Morgan believed that Randolph had put the blame on him to evade the extremely severe reprimand drawn from the admiral.

That incident, however, was closed. The admiral said nothing more about it. He glanced at a paper on his desk and said:

"Take ten men, go ashore at Cavite, find the house of Captain Del Valle and bring the American girl, Lucile Farnum, back with you. She has sent me a note. She is alone, in danger she says, and can't get away. You will go at once."

Randolph said—

"Very well, sir!"

Both ensigns saluted and started to leave the cabin. Morgan, heavy of build and solid, stood rigidly to one side and, as became a junior officer, allowed Randolph to go out first.

II

A WHALE-BOAT was lowered away and came alongside the *Olympia*. Nine sailors, blue-jackets in "whites," tumbled cheerfully into it from the gangway. Their white trousers were flabbily bunched and tied around their legs so the bell bottoms would not interfere in running—forward, of course—and their heavy ammunition belts sagged about their hips. Their rifles got in the way of their feet and tripped them. They pushed and jostled, and hearteningly wished one another would get shot in the stomach.

They were followed into the boat by a wizened boatswain's mate who had been

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a powder-monkey on the *Hartford* when Farragut lashed himself to the rigging the better to direct the battle of Mobile Bay. "Old Farry," as the boatswain was dubbed by way of recognition for his lament that there had never been but one admiral worth a —— since taps was sounded over Farragut, with fierce words in a scolding undertone somewhat lowered the pitch of the nervous joking and laughter.

For the past two days Old Farry had been telling the boys on the forecastle that there was another admiral worthy of the tutelage that Farragut had given him—just as though they, who had fought under him at Manila, but had never heard of the *Hartford* or Mobile Bay, didn't know that! Didn't know that he was the greatest man that ever lived! Yes, and they bantered and jibed Old Farry for worshiping a hero whose laurels were pressed and faded between old musty tomes of history. And Old Farry retorted blasphemously.

But when Morgan stepped in the boys were at once silent. Randolph followed: the senior officer is the last to enter and the first to leave a boat; and though ensigns scarcely ever think of the respective numbers which give them seniority, Morgan insisted upon punctiliously respecting that three-point seniority of Randolph.

The oars were manned; the boat was shoved off and its nose headed across the bay toward the beach where lay the freshly shattered bones of the Spanish fleet.

The sailors were a little nervous, which is something different from being timid, and wondered what on earth such a large detachment as ten men and two officers could be up to; for seven men and one officer in a whale-boat had, just after the battle, visited each of the wrecked ships in the face of the threatening Spanish and native mob that lined the beach, and had dismantled and totally disabled the less injured of the enemy's vessels.

A corporal's guard—scarcely more—of marines had landed and seized the Cavite arsenal and occupied the historic stone fort. The town outside the fort gates was in the hands of looting natives, for the demoralized Spaniards had fled when the Cavite batteries were silenced and the little bunch of grim marines had landed to take charge under their banner of *"Semper Fidelis."*

But an American citizen having reported herself in danger, more men were promptly dispatched to her rescue than had been spared to dismantle the beached fleet: which was the old-fashioned way of making both rescuers and rescued proud of their country.

III

ENSIGN RANDOLPH marched his men up to the fort, halted them in the shadow of the high, thick-buttressed wall, and leaving them in the charge of Morgan went off with the corporal of the guard to find the officer of the day.

At the end of fifteen minutes he returned with Captain Dayton of the marines and a half-breed Chinaman who had been hanging around the fort thriftily trying to sell runted bananas and green oranges. At some time in his life the Chinaman had been, so he explained, a servant in the Army and Navy Club at Hongkong, and could "talkee Englees aw samee white boy."

He was a miserable-looking creature with scrawny legs, a face like crumpled, yellow leather, and small sharp eyes deep in the sunken sockets. He had nothing to say unless spoken to, and then would burst volubly into a vague jargon permeated with curiously high intonations and as abruptly stop when he had finished, or an impatient gesture from Captain Dayton cut him off.

If his services had ever been effective in an English Army and Navy Club it was because the members could speak Chinese; for though he pointed across at the city and earnestly tried to tell something or other about Captain Del Valle, neither Dayton nor Randolph could make head or tail of his words.

"But this is the best we can do for you, Randolph," Captain Dayton said apologetically. "We know that he claims to know the way and is expected to take you to the house. There's hell poppin' out there—" he waved a hand toward the city—"with everybody drunk and looting. As I told you, there's been firing going on ever since we've been here. Can't imagine what it is. Can't spare the men to go out and see. Our job's to sit tight on this arsenal. But you'd better let me send a few men along with you?"

Marines be allowed to escort bluejackets into possible danger? Not on your life!

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The leathernecks are too cocky anyway. Flatfeet can take care of themselves.

But all that Randolph replied was:

"We'll be all right, Captain. Much obliged, though. This chap knows the way. There's nothing to do but to go to the house and get the woman and bring her back. Though what an American girl is doing at this particular end of the earth, I don't know."

"Wish you luck," the captain answered. "Have an idea you'll need it with this Jonah," indicating the dirty little Chinaman who stood imperturbably inhaling deeply of an acrid Filipino cigaret and looking out across the drill-grounds to the squat, solid buildings of the city. "I'd trust the Spaniards any day to what I've seen of the natives. Wicked-looking lot."

Having a guide, Randolph was ready to start.

He wished that the marine captain might be with him instead of Morgan. But it was purely an idle wish; made for no other reason than the instinctive and aggravated antipathy that he and Morgan had for each other. He could not talk to Morgan. He did not like to give orders to Morgan, though they were received with respectful attention. That was somewhat the trouble. They were received like an enlisted man is expected to receive orders, or another officer from one much his superior.

Randolph didn't like to be made to feel superior to any officer of his own rank. But moreover he felt that Morgan was cold-blooded; and that if Morgan ever had the chance he would not hesitate to get him in bad, even court-martialed. Not until there had been that misunderstanding about orders a few days before when the fleet was at Subig Bay looking for the enemy, had he believed that Morgan was capable of downright treachery. Randolph did not feel uneasy because Morgan was with him, for there was nothing to be uneasy over. But he simply hated the man and did not want him around.

Perhaps the admiral, for he had literally raised —— over the mixing of his orders, had not been without design in putting them together at the head of the party. Randolph wondered if he had done it deliberately, for he knew well how they had contradicted each other about the orders; and if he had done it deliberately, Randolph wondered why?

IV

THE party, marching double file, with Randolph and the Chinaman in the lead, the boatswain bringing up the rear, entered the narrow street of the old town and each man of them, excepting perhaps the Chinaman, was thrilled.

Out of the doorways and from dark stairways the natives pressed forward to watch wonderingly the little procession. They had heard that the Yankees were monstrous men, huge of body, inclined to cannibalism and eager to rape. Horrible men, these Yankees, so it was said, with faces so ugly that none could look upon them without fear.

But those smooth-cheeked kids and beardless officers—surely it was not their kind that had blown the fleet of Spain out of the bay! Only the wizened little fellow with the drawn cutlas at the rear looked like a fighting man, and he was not much bigger than a boy.

The crowd pressed into a rough street which was bulwarked on either side by the solid, square masonry of ancient builders who put in stone and cement that baffled the teeth of time. Faces peeped through the lattices of iron that bellied out from the windows above the street. There was shouting to the rear and cries in front, but wondering, suspicious silence on either side of the sailors as they marched along.

Silence except for an occasional "*amigo, amigo*" and a broad ingratiating grin from those that instinctively bow head and neck to the latest conqueror in the hope of thus being better able to pick his pockets. Silence except for an occasional muttering that sounded like "poon-tang-ah-la-mo," and the scowl on the faces of those that would prefer to cut a throat for the pennies in the pocket.

The crowd became thicker. It was hungry for a first sight of the strange men; and more and more drunken natives, some of them swaggering with heavy bolos at their waists, stood out in the street and barely made room for the slender procession of the *Americanos*.

Once Randolph started to turn and call Morgan's attention to a tall, lean fellow, drunk, and naked from the waist up, whose wrists bore half a dozen gold bracelets—loot! There were many men grotesquely arrayed in newly seized finery;

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and one fellow in dirty, loose trousers and the gold-braided jacket of a Spanish officer's full dress, strutted importantly for a half-square behind the boatswain—and nobody laughed at him.

On and on, the Chinaman led the way, and the crowd followed.

From somewhere in the rear a pebble came flying and struck one of the sailors. Some curious Filipino, from a safe distance, had been eager to test the temper of these queer fellows who looked like children. But the sailor who was struck did not turn around.

He knew what had happened. He merely fingered the scabbard of his bayonet and let his hand rest on the handle. Morgan, however, had seen and he turned to look back; hundreds of curious, expectant eyes that had also seen looked into his face. No more pebbles were thrown.

V

"HOW much farther?" Randolph asked the guide.

Instantly the Chinaman burst into lingual agitation, his voice rising in querulous intonations and his hands suddenly animated with nervous gestures.

"I guess I'll have to take your word for it—but I'd give a dollar to know what you're talking about," Randolph commented.

The Chinaman continued to gesticulate and talk. He stopped walking, the better to express himself, and so brought the detachment to a halt.

Old Farry touched the point of his cutlas to the ground and swore softly into the ear of the sailor nearest to him, complainingly wondering what there was in this devil-ridden burg to have caused white men to live in it for three hundred years.

Randolph ferreted about in his memory for some trace of long-distant lessons and asked a Filipino, who had pressed close as though to listen to the Chinaman, if he knew where was the house of Captain Del Valle.

A sort of breathlessness seemed to come over that part of the crowd which was close enough to hear. The Filipino to whom Randolph had spoken drew back startled. For a moment silence hung like a hush of awe, then a babble of undertones and whisperings began.

Morgan pulled the vizor of his cap lower and scowled. Old Farry raised his cutlas and gently felt of its newly sharpened edge as he stared hard into the swarm of faces. The sailors, but a moment before good-naturedly curious as men are when for the first time they see a foreign city, looked at one another questioningly.

"Captain Del Valle?" Randolph repeated to the Filipino.

But the fellow turned away in haste. He began to push through the crowd and cast backward a long glance from frightened eyes. Again a ripple of excited, lowspoken words went through the crowd.

"I'll be —— if I understand this," Randolph said suddenly to Morgan.

"Nor I," Morgan answered.

Then they both remembered that they were not friends.

"Go on, John," Randolph said to the Chinaman.

"Me catch 'em aw lite—" John began, but what he said more was unintelligible.

"You just catch 'em the house, John, and we'll talk it over later," Randolph said cheerfully, glancing back over his detachment to see that the men were in line and ready to go forward.

VI

FIFTEEN minutes later a rifle shot was heard. Then another—and another. The firing became rapid; but it did not seem to be made in volleys, and it sounded close.

Randolph drew his sword, halted his men and commanded—"Fix bayonets." Then it was—"Port arms, forward, double-time, march!"

The firing did not seem to be more than a block or two away.

As the men broke into a run the Chinaman started to dodge off to one side; but Randolph caught him by the shoulder and thrust him forward.

The men ran steadily, easily. Now and then some one swore under his breath as his foot slipped into a rut or struck a stone in the rough street. Their faces did not appear so youthful. The crowd leaped aside to make way for them.

Morgan was side by side with Randolph and between them they almost carried the Chinaman who either was, or pretended to be, barely able to run.

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The firing grew nearer—and was right at hand.

But when they rounded a corner and came on to the edge of a plaza, ten or fifteen Filipinos with rifles in their hands broke pell-mell for cover. They fled. Only one fired toward the sailors, and that bullet went high.

In thirty seconds the plaza had cleared as though the city was one of the dead; and Randolph and Morgan and all of the sailors only stood puffing and wondering.

It was easy to see what had been the target for the shooting: across the plaza was a large, high, heavy building, solid and oblong, made of stone, with tiled roof and balconies of iron and wood, and narrow deep-set windows covered with iron lattices that bellied outward like a sail in the wind.

The windows in only one part of the house—a high second-story room, it seemed—had been shot at; though attesting the awkward marksmanship of the besiegers were white pits that bullets had knocked in stone all over the side of the great house.

As the sailors stood looking at the house, and not noticing the cautious, furtive coffee-colored faces that peeped around corners, a woman came out on to a balcony about which were the marks of many bullets. In her hand she held a large army revolver. She stood too high and far away for any one to make out clearly her features.

But the revolver in her hand, and the pitted stones about the balcony from which she came, brought a volley of cheers from the nine young bluejackets. The woman had fought a good fight: that was enough for them. It matter not whether she was young, old, Spaniard or half-breed.

She called down to them. Hers was the voice of an American and her first words were a warning—

"Look out—" many words were lost, and what could be heard were—"not to be trusted—two days—all over the house—one bullet left——"

A shot from the opposite side of the plaza splintered the top of the railing at which the woman was standing.

Instantly the impulsive Randolph pushed four sailors forward with a gesture and the laconic but comprehensive command—

"Get him!"

The sailors went forward at full speed.

To Old Farry, Randolph added—

"Go with them—don't let them be drawn too far away—in an alley!"

Old Farry was running as he answered "Aye, aye, sir!" and the hand that held his cutlas punctiliously reached the top button of his coat in a salute when he was fifteen feet away—that promptly had he answered the command.

Randolph should have Morgan forward, and he knew it. And Morgan knew it. But Randolph's instinctive hesitancy to give orders to Morgan caused him without thinking to send the boatswain.

The pursuing sailors were scarcely out of sight before Randolph wished bitterly that he could recall the command. He saw that he had bungled. He imagined that he could feel the sardonically censorious eyes of Morgan on him. It was folly to have broken up his small detachment to chase an elusive sniper in a strange city. If the chase were to be made—and an instant too late he realized that there was really no need for it—then he and all the men should have gone.

He knew that he should have deployed his men or hurried them into some kind of shelter if he thought the situation dangerous; which there was really no cause for thinking when one rifle had been fired. It was the fact that the shot was at a woman—at any woman; but he had leaped the more eagerly to do vengeance because she was one speaking his own tongue in his own accents.

He felt keenly his chivalrous folly. He couldn't take what was left of his detachment and follow those he had sent forward and be sure of catching up or locating them in the turns and twists that they might have made in the chase; and, moreover, to try it would be to leave the woman, who was evidently the one the admiral had sent him to fetch, in apparent danger. And he couldn't send other men to try to support Old Farry's party without the further folly of splitting what was left of his detachment.

He could only hope that nothing would happen—and wait. And there was Morgan waiting and watching, too; and no doubt smiling cynically behind the grim expression that sat on his broad, rough-featured face. The responsibility was all Randolph's. Morgan, if anything went wrong, could have the joy of telling the admiral all about

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the blunders and know that he would be free from censure.

Randolph carefully hid any expression of face or voice that would show his feeling, and brought his men across the plaza and halted them under the balcony. The house was strong as a citadel. If danger pressed, he thought to take the men within. But there were no dangers in sight: nothing but small groups of natives hovering at corners.

"This is Captain Del Valle's house?" Randolph asked of the woman.

She stood on the balcony some twenty feet above and could be plainly seen. Her face was drawn and haggard for one young and beautiful. But two sleepless days and feverish alert nights had pinched her face and left big bluish rings under her eyes.

"Yes," she said, speaking directly, simply, with none of the protean artifice of woman to man, "the natives hated him. They've looted the house. All except the señora's room. They broke in the first night—after the battle. They have been howling and shooting inside and out ever since.

"The señora killed herself as soon as she heard that El Capitan was dead. The servants ran away—I was alone. Two Spanish soldiers from the fort tried to stop the shooting out there on the plaza. They kicked and cuffed right and left. But they were killed. These devils dragged the corpses up and down all day long. They were all drunk. It was awful! And inside here—I have señora's room barricaded, but I didn't know what minute they would break through.

"Last night it was quieter. One of the *mestizas* who had been the señora's maid crept up to the wall below the balcony and called to me. She came to beg from me señora's gold-woven mantilla. They always want something that isn't theirs—these loathsome natives! I told her I would give it to her if she would have some one carry a note from me to one of the American ships. She promised.

"I told her that if the note wasn't delivered I would soon be dead and that my special delight as a ghost would be haunting and bringing misfortune to her.

"I frightened the life out of her. Then I gave her the note and mantilla. I knew she would try to deliver it. And I knew somebody would come off the American ships to help me.

"It has been horrible. I have just one bullet left. This—" she held the revolver over the railing for them to see—"belonged to El Capitan's brother. They buried him alive in an ant-hill two years ago. Cut out his tongue and stuck splinters in his eyes and then buried him. I've been señora's companion for four years.

"I think you've scared them away. But look out. They hate Americans as much as Spaniards. They'd hate anybody that kept them from looting. Cavite's full of half-breeds. Not Spanish—Chinese and Tagalogs. The worst possible mixture. That cutthroat you have down there with you—" pointing toward the Chinaman—"is one of the prisoners that got out when the natives broke into the jail. I can tell by the convict shirt he has on.

"All the Spaniards fled around the bay—overland—to Manila when the fleet was destroyed. I was afraid to show myself—every one knew I was an American, and you know how it is. I ought to be proud of the victory, and oh, how I did pray and hold my breath while the guns were booming out in the bay! But poor El Capitan! And those gallant fellows that were murdered and cut up out there—they knew I was an American!"

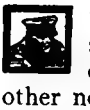
Her voice failed her. She turned away, crying.

Some of the sailors coughed. Others swore bitterly under their breath. And some looked with narrowed, hard eyes across the plaza to where little groups of the coffee-colored crowd that had followed them lurked at the corners—eager to see, but wary, and with something that struck the sailors as sinister in their gaping stolidity.

Randolph adjusted his cap and looked anxiously down the street in which the four sailors and the bosun had disappeared.

Morgan thoughtfully prodded a cobblestone with the point of his sword.

VII



"WELL, Mr. Morgan," Randolph said—when officers are in the slightest degree formal they address each other not by their rank, but by the civilian "Mr."—"I suppose we had better go up and escort Miss Farnum down."

Had he been with any other officer, Randolph would have thought nothing of taking two or three of the sailors and going

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up into the house with them and leaving the other officer below. But with Morgan he felt differently. He also had a distaste for in the least appearing as the "rescuing hero." He might have sent Morgan up alone, but as the ranking officer it was his place not to remain behind.

Randolph was not cold-blooded enough to free himself from self-consciousness in his treatment of Morgan; and it was not pleasant to be sure that Morgan would never have been so foolishly impulsive as to have split his detachment and sent men clattering down an unknown street on what was wilder than a wild-goose chase. Moreover, what the girl had told him of Filipino cruelty made him anxious for the missing men.

Like most of the Americans of the fleet and at home, he had fancied that the natives thought of them as "saviors," or some such beautiful abstraction.

He—and other Americans—was to learn later of the fierce lust for loot; of the Insurrectos drawn swarmingly from afar to the gates of Manila on the promise of being given the city for plunder as soon as the despicable Yankees were thrown into the sea—the later being only a mere detail that could be attended to almost any time.

Morgan made the conventional answer of "Very well, sir," to Randolph's suggestion.

Then Randolph said to two sailors—

"Open those doors."

He pointed with his sword to wide, high, double doors through which a coach might easily have been driven.

The sailors jumped forward, threw their weight against the thick planks of old Spanish oak, reinforced with curiously wrought strips of hammered iron, and pushed the doors slowly back on smooth, noiseless hinges, thus opening to view a long, high, dark corridor which was littered with scattered clothing, broken pottery and a big square-faced bottle here and there.

Gin is the original contents of the "square-face." But the natives replace the more precious liquor with a vicious brew of their own that Americans most familiar with the stuff have subsequently classified as *bino*.

If taken at all freely it is enough to put such fighting courage into a sheep that this gentlest of pastoral creatures will waltz right up and bite off the ear of a wolf.

VIII

"YOU men wait here," Randolph said, "and if anybody starts anything jump right inside. Keep a sharp lookout down the street for the bosun and his party."

Then Randolph and Morgan stepped inside the cool, dark corridor, floored with large square dull red tiles. They walked straight on to the broad stairway some fifty feet away.

As Randolph started up the stairs he heard one of the sailors outside cry exultingly—

"Here comes Old Farry and he's got——"

Neither Randolph nor Morgan heard more. As they glanced backward they caught a glimpse of the sailors bunched together and staring southward across the plaza in the direction that Old Farry and the four sailors had gone in pursuit of the sniper.

The officers saw something else that quickened their heart-beats: the great oaken doors on their noiseless hinges were being swung shut by two Filipinos who had stood or crept behind the doors. And at once Filipinos seemed to appear all over the place.

Randolph and Morgan shouted as with one voice at the sailors outside. But it was too late.

The doors closed and the thick bar of seasoned timber fell into place; nothing less than a battering-ram could beat through. The house had been built in some bygone century when it was wrought with the strength of a fortress, and no doubt had many times needed that strength to withstand forays and attacks from the Chinese pirates that had sometimes crept in overland and been joined by the fierce natives.

As the bar fell across the doors, the Filipinos began yelping in glee. To the trapped officers it seemed that natives came as if by magic from every direction. They leaped and darted and yelled till the score of them seemed a hundred.

Frantic beating of the butts of the sailors' rifles against the doors was heard, and Randolph and Morgan started forward to cut their way through the half-dozen natives that intervened with brandishing weapons, when from the other end of the corridor came the terrific report of a rifle

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fired within doors. A bullet struck at their feet and ricocheted with a vicious spat against the wall.

The natives before the door, too, were in line of fire but they did not seem to notice. One carried a long, Malayan kris, the others bolos; and they were yelping and coming forward on the run. From the other end of the corridor others came, but only one had a rifle.

Randolph shot right and left with deadly effect, but soon emptied his revolver. Two men fell and another lurched against the wall and stood doubled over as though with a mortal wound—then sank to the floor.

But the officers saw that the situation was more than desperate; they were hopelessly outnumbered.

Morgan, clutching at Randolph's arm, cried—

"Up the stairs."

Springing up he partly pulled Randolph after him.

Half-way up they were, then the rifle roared at them again; and the bullet came close.

Morgan stopped. That rifle had to be silenced. He deliberately changed his sword to his left hand and taking the revolver in his right the better to aim, quickly drew a careful bead and fired. The man with the rifle pitched forward. Another started to grab it from the dead man's hand. Morgan shot again—and the rifle lay untouched.

He was calmly bearing down on still a third man, when a fierce warning shout and jerk from Randolph made him turn just in time to see Randolph throw himself with upraised sword against a heavy pock-marked native that stood on the stairs some three steps above them.

The Filipino had thrust forward his bolo at Morgan—but Randolph leaped forward to take the blow, and he fell with the heavy knife driven far into his chest.

Morgan lunged. The full weight of his body was behind the hilt of the sword. The point took the pock-marked Filipino full at the throat, and went so far that the blade broke when Morgan wrenched it free.

A bolo thrown from below hurtled past his head and men were on the first step of the stairs, but Morgan calmly turned again toward where still another native was bending to pick up the rifle. And as that fellow sprawled lifeless on his face, a flash of thankfulness that most of the rifles were evidently in the hands of snipers outside, passed over Morgan's mind.

He glanced swiftly upward. The stairway above was clear, but at the foot some fifteen yelping wild-faced men were crowding on the steps.

He rapidly emptied his revolver into the mass—firing the three remaining shells. And some that were dangerous men when he pressed the trigger were out of the fight when the hammer clicked on an empty chamber.

The others paused. For a moment they stood indecisively glaring like baffled wolves. But their shaken boldness was reassured by the sight of Randolph's fallen body. But one man stood against them—and they were many. They had the odds with which dogs will harry a wild boar. But even at that, they hesitated and held their cries, balked to see the one man standing on the stairway waiting as though to receive them with never a thought of their odds.

Seconds, scarcely minutes, had passed since the two officers saw the thick doors swing shut, barring them within and their men without; but it had all happened with that swift intensity that makes moments seem as unmeasured time.

IT WAS only for the briefest seconds that there was silence—a cloistral hush in the great dim corridor that had become a shambles—as the Filipinos paused at the foot of the stairs.

Morgan had broken his revolver and was trying to fill it with cartridges before the rush which he knew was coming. Then he felt a weak tug at his trousers. He bent over Randolph, but kept his face turned so that his eyes were on the men below who were beginning to raise their weapons and lean forward for the charge.

Randolph gasped—

"Morgan go up—I'm done for—stairs clear—go on—I'm done for—go—it's hopeless—leave me—get away——"

The rush was on.

"You go to ——!" Morgan shouted—not at Randolph, but at the idea—as he dodged to one side, narrowly evading a bolo that came like a fat steel arrow.

He snapped his half-loaded revolver together and fired pointblank. Two more

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men went down; but six remained. They barely paused. They knew the revolver was empty and that if they hesitated it would be loaded again.

Morgan dropped the gun, then stooped and snatched up Randolph's sword.

With the broken blade in his left hand and the true blade in his right, he sprang forward to meet the attack. He leaped far down the steps because he knew that if compelled to retreat in the least from where he had been standing Randolph's body would be exposed.

The Filipinos were yelling the cries of blood-lust. They fought as savages fight, reaching forward to strike and then drawing back and lunging out again.

They did not come to the charge like men that have written the fuller pages of history from time immemorial—else Morgan would have been overborne and cut down at once. But they were fierce and deadly. They slashed and feinted; and twice Morgan felt the whistling breath of a hurled bolo.

The taller, more slender man with the wicked kris like a sheet of silver flame was far the boldest, and a better warrior than his fellows. His blows were hard and cunning; and but for the broken sword with which he fended, Morgan would have had a deeper cut in his thigh.

But he, too, slashed and thrust and warded, darting this way and that across the wide stairs.

Again and again he saw bitterly that he was being forced to take a backward step that could not be regained. For when he fought on one side of the stairs some man came higher on the other, and when he lunged across to drive him back, still another would rise a step on the side left open.

It was best to stand in the middle, but four men abreast could easily mass against him; and though they feared the gleaming flashes that came at their heads, yet the weight of numbers kept them steadily at the attack. Morgan saw that he was losing ground; and he shouted over his shoulder for Randolph to creep further up the stairway; but Randolph did not move nor make answer.

It was a losing fight, but those that darted in at him did not always draw back scatheless. Morgan's longer blade was fleshed and stained in red; but to reach the darting bodies was too far for deadly blows, and he dared not leap closer than he did for the man at whom he struck lest to do so would bring him within the reach of weapons on either side.

His was a strong arm and quick. But odds are odds, and the strongest arms grow less swift when they ward away thrice as many, and heavier, weapons.

He was breathing hoarsely with teeth clinched and lips drawn back. The work was furious. He became aware of weakness in his gashed thigh. He strained savagely against the slowness that was weighing down his movements, and summoned from within the depths of him the last muscle power to speed his longer blade as it flashed like a serpent's tongue before the distorted faces turned upward on the stairs.

As he withdrew another step—bringing him to Randolph's feet—he thanked the god of battles for putting into the heads of his foemen forgetfulness of the rifle that lay less than thirty yards away.

And there—on that very step where he stood—he resolved to stay.

Randolph was either dead, or, more likely, had fainted; and to pass higher was to leave a fellow officer to certain death; or if dead already, to mutilation.

Not a glimmering remembrance of what Randolph had been to him came into his brain. He was fighting instinctively the fight that a man of courage makes for another. Death with six handsful of gleaming knives was at his heart. But he had no thought of death other than that it meant the end of the fight.

To turn away or to stop before the end would be to check abruptly the momentum of a courage that gave no more heed to the grave than a meteor in its flight gives to the sun toward which it rushes. Some things can not be done!

It seemed that he had been on the stairs for hours. Had he been able to look at it, the watch that ticked in his pocket would have told him that he had not been in the corridor altogether more than fourteen minutes.

His arms seemed sheathed in lead. His wounded leg was weak—not in the least painful, for wounds ache only when the nerves have time to take the message of the torn flesh. He opened his mouth and gulped down the air, heaving his lungs like bellows at a damp forge.

The foemen too had quit their yelling,

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and were grunting and snarling and panting hoarsely like starving jackals breaking through the last struggles of a downed stag.

The end was in sight. Morgan gathered himself for a last leap. He would not wait to be struck down when simply no longer able to lift an arm.

In another minute he felt that sheer exhaustion would lower his swords and leave open the way for the death-thrust. But to fling himself forward—points first—he knew would be to make more dear the price of his death.

He lifted himself on his toes, sank quickly to his haunches for the spring that would carry him on to the heads of the men that leaned forward six steps below him—and hesitated.

The Filipinos, too, paused suddenly with weapons held in arms as though magically turned to stone.

Overhead there was crashing and shouting and swearing, the stamp of furious feet—and from the balustrade above, a gun roared.

Above the clash and roar the shrill voice of the old boatswain cried:

"Get 'em! Get 'em! Down at 'em."

And bounding headlong down the steps he came.

Down the stairs with perilous leaps, six sailors came on the heels of Old Farry. Their rifles were tipped with steel. After the first shot from over balustrade nobody stopped to fire; the bayonets were hungry for the taste of flesh.

The Filipinos were cornered. They ran toward the broad oaken doors as the nearest way out; but the trap they had set for others held them.

Before a hand could touch the wooden bar they saw that there was no escape. The sailors were up with them—and as one man, the Filipinos dropped their weapons, flung up their hands and screeched for mercy.

Morgan, leaning over the banister, shouted:

"Don't shoot! Take them prisoners!"

The Filipinos were hedged with bayonets pointed just as close as the furious sailors could point them without drawing blood.

Old Farry dropped the point of his cutlas, put his hands on his hips and looking toward Morgan who still held a blood-stained sword in each hand, said disgustedly—

"Well I'll be ——!"

When Morgan turned away and started to bend over the unconscious body of Randolph, he became aware of the woman standing above him on the stairs.

She was very pale and frightened and trembled. She could scarcely speak, but she asked again and again:

"Is he dead? Is he dead?"

Randolph himself had pulled the bolo from his ribs, and the wound had bled him into unconsciousness.

"Blankets—water—quick," Morgan said to her; and without a word she hurried away.

He called to one of the sailors to come from below, and they gently carried Randolph down the red-stained stairs and laid him carefully on the blanket that the woman brought. She carried, too, a glass with a little water in it, and explained that it was all she had left in her room of what she had taken when she prepared for the siege two days before.

But the boatswain opened the great doors again on the noiseless hinges, and the three sailors, driving in a lone prisoner—not counting the Chinaman who had served as a guide—to put with those that stood fearfully against the wall, came in. These went with Miss Farnum to the well at the rear and fetched water.

IX

"IT WAS just this way, sir," Old Farry explained to Morgan while two of the sailors were gone up-stairs with Miss Farnum to get a mattress that would serve as a stretcher. "We chased that feller till he got tired o' runnin' an' ducked in a doorway. We busted in the door an' got him. Nothin' to it. We was comin' back—almost here—when all o' sudden the fellers out there started yellin' an' makin' signs o' trouble.

"Fer a minute after I found out what's the trouble I didn't know what t' do or jest how t'get in here. We wasted a good two minutes tryin' t' batter in them doors with rocks. The lady was jumpin' around up there on the bridge. You know that makes a feller kind o' nervous, sir. I tol' her to throw down a line an' I had t' explain 't was a rope I wanted.

"But she didn't have none. She ducked into 'er cabin an' brought out a couple o'

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sheets. We tore 'em in two, spliced 'em together in a jiffy, sir, tossed an end up to her an' told 'er t' make it fast above. It give way jest as soon as I started up. Had t' be done over. Next time 'twas better.

"I told three men t' stay b'low an' watch that sniper and Chink an' scare off the niggers that was pokin' their heads aroun' out there. The fellers come up hand o'er hand like they was raised on a windjammer. The lady had 'bout ever'thing in the place piled 'gainst that door of hern, an' then, by ——, sir, if she wasn't the first 'un out. Jest as the last trunk was heaved away, she bolted. 'Twas her that fired."

X

THE little detachment again filed through the streets of Cavite. At the head were Morgan and the imperturbable Chinaman. Morgan limped slightly, and there was blood all over him; but his shoulders were straight and his head up. Behind him came four sailors, their rifles slung across their shoulders, and each sailor held the corner of a mattress upon which lay the covered body of their ensign. Miss Farnum walked by the side of the stretcher. In her hands was a small valise —all her earthly possessions—which she refused to let any one carry for her. It seemed to her that the others were burdened enough.

Behind the stretcher came seven Filipinos with their hands bound behind them; and many had blood on their tattered shirts and trousers, and their heads and arms showed wounds. Then followed two sailors with rifles held at points forward and butts against the hip: guards they were. Behind them were four more sailors, marching with rifles on their shoulders; and bringing up the rear was the old boatswain, his drawn cutlas swinging across his breast with every step.

A crowd filled the street before and after them; but it gave way without need of word or gesture from Morgan, and followed at a distance of respect behind Old Farry, who did not deign to cast so much as one glance behind him. Those who stood at the side as the little procession passed, pressed each other tightly back against the walls of the buildings to make more room; and all looked with awe upon the seven of their own kin and kind that trudged shamefacedly behind the improvised stretcher.

But there was no thought of rescue, of laughter, or of missiles hurled from a distance. Not much! Those were the men that had blown the fleet of Spain out of the water and they looked like men who could do more if tempted in the least. Ten men bring back seven prisoners and through streets lined with their kith and friends! What manner of men were these, indeed, when the Spaniards had moved about to make arrests only in groups of fifty and hundreds?

At the fort Ensign Morgan turned over his prisoners to Captain Dayton, who whistled wonderingly at what he saw, but had to imagine what he believed, for Morgan said nothing more than that there had been a little skirmish and as many were dead as were prisoners. But the Chinaman, still unmoved and imperturbable, was recommended to Captain Dayton for what favors might suggest themselves to him as fitting for services done according to promise.

On board the flagship, Morgan made his report to the admiral. He told of how he and Randolph had been trapped, and of how Randolph had leaped forward deliberately to take the blow intended for him, and of how the quick-witted boatswain and Miss Farnum had promptly effected the rescue.

It was some weeks later before Randolph told his version to the admiral. He had seen much of the fight before he became unconscious. And when he had finished, the admiral put his hand on the young ensign's shoulder and started to speak. But he said nothing.

He turned his face away and there was moisture in his eyes. It was not of those two men alone that he thought: it was that his country would never lose her battles while she had such men to bear her arms.

MISS FARNUM? The admiral got passage for her on the mail dispatch-boat so that she went to Hongkong, from where she cabled to friends; and neither Morgan nor Randolph ever heard of her again. There are times when love of women is not the greatest thing in the world.

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"CALAMITY JANE"—SCOUT AND FRONTIERSWOMAN

by E. A. BRININSTOOL

IN THE days when General George Crook was engaged in Indian warfare, Calamity Jane was one of his trusted, dependable scouts. Large of frame, well-proportioned and not overly feminine in appearance, when dressed in male attire she would be passed for a man ninety times out of a hundred. She rode a horse astride, carried a repeating rifle and a pair of big navy revolvers—and was an expert shot.

When "Wild Bill" Hickok came over to Deadwood from Dodge City, Kansas, he met Calamity Jane, and they became great friends, agreeing that when they died they would be buried close together. Calamity Jane sleeps by the side of Wild Bill Hickok in the cemetery at Deadwood, where many men and women sleep who "died with their boots on."

Calamity Jane was a peculiar woman who had burned the candle of fate and drunk of the dregs of remorse. She lived for years the life of the sterner sex. She gambled for gold and asked no favors. She had a warm heart, and never was known to turn a deaf ear to any one in distress.

One night, while gambling, dancing and drinking was running rampant in the old "Blue Front" dance hall, on the main street of Deadwood, a young tenderfoot from the outside world entered. He had heard of the free-and-easy ways of Deadwood and decided to play a prank. A number of girls of the underworld were standing by the bar waiting for the music to start up, when the tenderfoot addressed them—

"La-dies, won't you take a drink?"

They all were agreeable and faced about to the bar. The tenderfoot waited until all the glasses had been set out, then he picked up the whisky-bottle, filled his own glass, and still holding the bottle, bowed low and said—

"Here's to you, la-dies."

He tossed down the liquor, handed the barkeeper a quarter, and laughed at the trick he had played on the "la-dies."

That laugh cost him dearly soon after.

Hardly had the music started when Calamity Jane approached and said:

"I am Calamity Jane, and I saw how you played a joke on those girls. I would like for you to take a drink with me."

"With pleasure," replied the tenderfoot, for he had heard of the famous scout of the Black Hills.

They drank. Then Calamity Jane said—

"Take another; it isn't often I meet a real sport, and I wish to make it pleasant for you."

The second drink was stowed away by the tenderfoot, but not by Calamity Jane. He noticed that the woman had not drunk her whisky, and asked why.

"I took one drink with you, you yellow-livered pup," she said, as her eyes flashed, "and that almost choked me. Here—take another!"

"But I can't," he declared. "I really can't, for I am now full to the brim."

"Take another!" came the steely voice of Calamity Jane, as she whipped out a gun.

The young man hesitated, and a bullet clipped the brim of his hat. The tenderfoot took whisky straight, quickly.

"Take another!" again came the command, and she was obeyed, while the fiddler stopped and the dancing girls and their escorts gathered about to see the fun.

By this time the young man was reeling about from side to side, but Calamity Jane had no pity. Again her revolver was pointed, and she commanded—

"Here, young feller, take another, and be quick about it!"

The hands of the man trembled so that he could not pour out the drink and the barkeeper did it for him. He raised it to his lips, took one sip and fell to the sawdust floor—all in.

He was "dead to the world"—full of tanglefoot to the top, for he had taken a dozen drinks during the evening before he met Calamity Jane's entertaining ways.

Calamity Jane slipped her gun in the holster, and remarked as she left:

"I'll bet both my guns—which is about all I have left to bet—that the next time that coyote calls a bunch of girls up to treat them, he will remember that they are at least women—if not 'la-dies.'"

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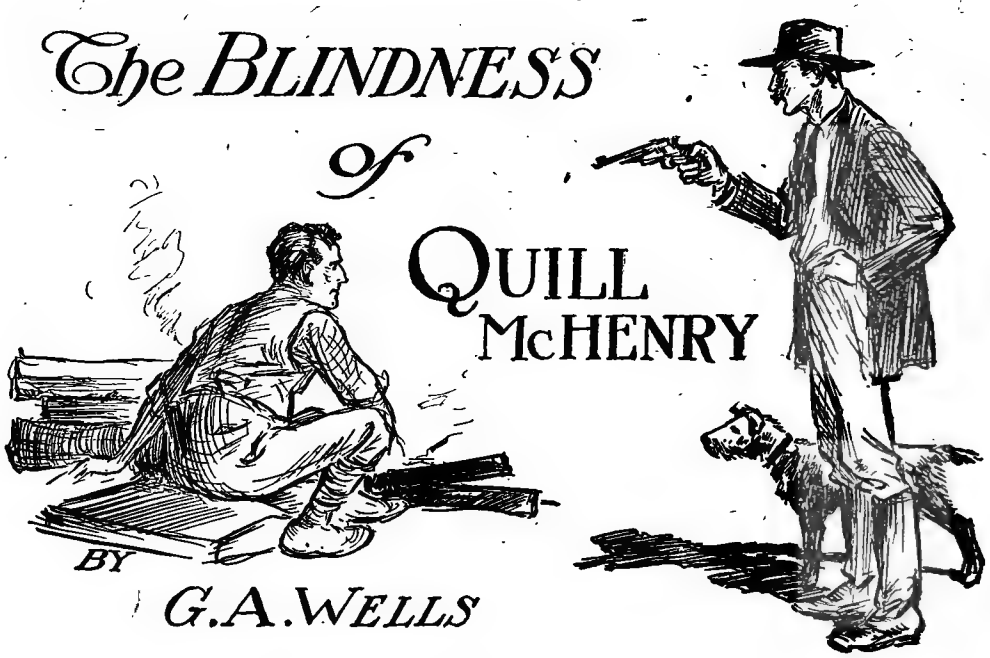
The BLINDNESS of QUILL McHENRY



BY G. A. WELLS

Author of "Extrahazardous," "Tactics," etc.

ALWAYS had Quill McHenry contended against all who came to argue the subject with him, that Mose was a much more dependable assistant than any other the county allowed him as part of his official equipment. In color Mose was a dirty brown, with a black patch over his left eye to lend him an air of haughtiness. His height was about twenty-four inches and he weighed some forty pounds, every pound of it made up of clean flesh and steel muscles.

One morning in the early days of April, the Mercer *Herald-Journal* came on the streets with a flamboyant caption heading an article wherein was set forth at great length what little was actually known, and a great deal more of what was conjectured, concerning "the most heinous crime ever perpetrated in this section of our fair State."

The article stated that an elderly man by the name of Gorgan, who lived alone in a little three-roomed house at the edge of town, had at some time during the night been brutally murdered by person or persons unknown. The body was found by the milkman. On the floor of another room the instrument of death was found, a peculiar looking knife which Benny Prime, who had served a "hitch" in the Navy, immediately pronounced a sheath-knife much in demand by sailors. On the bone handle the single name "Harwich" was roughly carved.

The article went on to say, that "our efficient chief of police, Mr. Thomas Harding, strongly suspecting the work to be that of a transient burglar, made a strict and minute examination of the premises. Strange to relate, however, this theory was exploded when a large roll of money was found lying in plain view on a bureau. The idea that the money was overlooked in the subsequent 'get-away' was scouted as untenable. A reporter for the *Herald-Journal* interviewed, etc."

In the very early morning of the next day Quill's telephone rang. It was Harding. Would the sheriff of Mercer County be so kind as to see what he could do with his dog? The sheriff of Mercer County would; in fact, it would give him great pleasure to render any assistance that lay within his power. Quill's preparations to take up the case were simple, and to the point. They consisted altogether of kissing his wife and baby good-by, and leading Mose to the scene of the crime.

Before the dog's nose were presented

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various articles that in all probability had been touched by the criminal. Mose was well versed in that sort of thing and knew just what was expected of him.

The sniffing process finished, Mose, with Quill tagging after at the end of the leash, began an examination of the surrounding territory, and at last emitted a throaty bay that said—

"All right, Quill, let's be on our way."

The trail was picked up under a side window of the house, and from thence passed out through a gap in the fence to a field grown up with weeds. Across this they loped, Quill waving back those who would have followed.

In a short time they came to the foot of the Knobs, a range of low-lying hills that wound its rugged way clear across the southern part of the county. The dog did not hesitate, but turned at a sharp angle and pulled his master along the bottom of a shallow gulch that ran parallel with the range. It was noon when they came to a gap, a sort of V in the hills, and here Mose turned in, whining eagerly. Quill groaned.

The gap was the only opening into the hills for fifty miles in either direction, and through here the railroad had once attempted to build a branch line to a town beyond. But the work was more than the engineers had bargained for and it was abandoned. Not, however, before they had blasted down thousands of tons of rock from the sides of the narrow valley, thus leaving the place in a more impassable state than befoee.

Several men had lost their lives in these operations, and there were those in the vicinity who swore that in the dead of night the spirits of the dead men could be heard wailing and crying like lost souls. The place was known as the Haunted Valley, and few people could find sufficient inducement to go there. Quill himself had hunted there a number of times, for the place fairly swarmed with small game, and one well supplied with salt and water could have lived there for months without a visit to civilization.

So up the Haunted Valley they went, the dog dragging Quill over rocks that barked his shins and through briars and underbrush that tore at his naked hands and face until they bled profusely. Dusk was coming on rapidly when they pulled up on a ledge that tipped off abruptly to a decline of several hundred yards in length.

From the ledge the sheriff had a remarkably fine view of the valley farther up. But the only living thing he saw was a buzzard soaring high in the evening sky, though he could hear the barking of the squirrels in the thickets below him. The place was desolate and deserted, and in spite of himself Quill shivered.

"Good God! Ain't it awful, Mose? If I was to murder a man I'd come right up here and hide out; it's a good place for—Hello! What's that?" he broke off suddenly.

Squinting his eyes for better vision he fastened them on an object a mile or so up the valley. It was a thin column of smoke floating up into the still evening air.

"Holy Jupiter! What do you think of that?" he ejaculated.

Mose replied with a tug at the leash.

"If memory serves me right there's a shack about there," went on Quill. "It's one of the shacks the railroad people put up. Mose, do you think it is possible our man is hiding out there? It must be, eh? Let's get along and see," he added, casting an anxious glance to the west where the sun was balancing, a blood-red disk on a peak across the valley.

MOSE needed no other urging than a slackening of the leash that restrained him, and with a bound he jerked Quill over the edge of the ledge. It was more than an hour later, thanks to the tangle of undergrowth that confronted them on every hand, that they burst into a small clearing in the center of which stood a shack. Mose gave a grunt of satisfaction which said as plain as words—

"Well, here we are, Quill, my work is done; now see what you can do."

The shack was one of those makeshift affairs that construction people erect to serve a passing need. It was now in a sad state of disrepair. The roof sagged dangerously near the middle and threatened to give way at a moment's notice and plunge itself into the interior. On the side where the sheriff stood a single window, devoid of glass and shutters, glared at him like some evil eye, and at one end a door swung from its one rusty, creaking hinge.

For some time Quill gazed at the place with a sort of fascination, his lips moving silently as if debating something with himself. His ears tensed to catch the faintest

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sound, he caught the dog to his breast and retreated into the bushes at his back.

After an interval of silent watching and waiting he heard the distinct sound of a snapping twig, and he placed his hand on the butt of the gun swinging at his hip.

Presently a man stepped from the bushes not thirty feet away, and after standing in the shadows a few moments looking this way and that, his head cocked in an attitude of listening, made for the door of the shack and disappeared.

"Mose, I reckon that's the party we want to see," whispered Quill in the dog's ear as the man disappeared. "Now what's the best thing to do? We can stand here till the sky falls on our heads and we won't get no place, while if we take our hearts in our teeth and march right up there he'll either get us or we'll get him.

"Anyhow, Mose, you've heard that story about faint heart never winning fair lady, ain't you? Well, by the token of that, I figure that faint sheriff never took no prisoners. Now listen, Mose, and listen good. There may be some shooting. If this party happens to get me, you're deputized to toddle along back home and tell the missus and the kid what's become of me. Remember, you're deputized, and the law says you've got to do it regardless. I hope you don't have to exercise that function, Mose, God knows I do!" he added as an afterthought, a catch in his voice.

It was now quite dark, and with the dog still clutched to his breast for safety's sake, Quill stepped cautiously from the protecting bushes and approached the shack. Arriving at the door he paused to have a look inside. At the far end he saw a man bending over a fireplace busying himself with a bed of glowing embers.

Step by step Quill worked himself into the place, and at last stood in the very center of the single room. The man at the fire, hearing the creaking of a loose board in the floor as Quill stepped on it, straightened and wheeled like a flash, only to find himself gazing into the black muzzle of Quill's gun.

"You needn't put up your hands, mister, but see that you keep 'em at a respectable distance from your clothes," cautioned the sheriff, his voice full of grit.

A pine knot the man held in his hand he now tossed to the embers with a resigned shrug of his broad shoulders, and this taking fire the room burst into a glow of yellow light. For an interval they looked each other straight in the eye, the one with an expression suggestive of contempt, Quill's face holding an air of speculation. At length Quill said:

"Just march yourself to the wall yonder and turn your back while I go through your pockets."

The other displayed uncertainty, almost rebellion, a moment, then abruptly turned on his heel and walked to the nearest wall, his nose literally touching the rough boards. Placing the dog on the floor with a command to behave himself the sheriff passed to his prisoner and went through his pockets, but found no weapon of any sort. He backed to the center of the room again and ordered the man to face about.

Quill noticed that he was not a big man as far as physical stature was concerned, nevertheless there was an air of bigness about him; it was imparted by the thick neck and deep chest, together with the short, strong arms and the stocky legs that spraddled apart as he stood. Quill instinctively realized that his prisoner would be a tough customer to handle in a rough-and-tumble encounter.

He roughly guessed the other's age at forty-five, though he might have been younger. His skin was a deep brown, almost dusky, much wrinkled, and had that generally tough appearance of the skin of one who lives much in the open and undergoes privations and hardships.

"I reckon you know who I am," said Quill when the monotony of silence began to get on his nerves.

The man arched his shoulders with a shrug of indifference.

"It don't matter," he replied.

"Well, I'm the sheriff," Quill admitted.

"Oh," was the other's short response, which response disconcerted Quill not a little, for he had expected the man to be surprised at least.

The confession appeared to affect him not at all.

"Would you like to know why I'm here?"

"It don't matter," repeated the man.

"You'll have to know sooner or later, so I'll tell you now," said Quill rather testily. "Old man Gorgan was found dead yesterday morning with a hole in his heart. I was sent out to look up the party that put the hole there and bring him in."

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The stranger dropped his gray eyes from the sheriff's face to the dog at his feet.

"I suppose the pup had something to do with your coming here," said he.

"Mose knows his business," replied Quill with unconcealed pride.

The man laughed bitterly.

"Yes, he does; that's a fact. Well, you've found your man, Mr. Sheriff. I killed——"

"I must warn you that anything you say now will be used against——"

Quill began the official cant, but the other cut him short with an impatient gesture of his hand.

"——! Stow that gab! I know all about that. I'm not denying that I killed Gorgan; you can tell 'em that. I'm —— glad I killed him, and I'd do it again with pleasure. You can tell 'em that, too."

QUILL stared at his prisoner with astonishment. Heretofore prisoners had made haste to deny their connection with the crime with which they stood charged, but here was a man who made no attempt to deny his guilt; in fact, it seemed to give him pleasure in confessing it.

"You're queer," said Quill at last for want of something better to say.

"Queer?" He paused and seemed to study the word. "No, not at all; merely human. At any rate, you've got me. What next?"

"We can't start for town now, that's certain," replied Quill after a few moments' study of the situation. "We'll just stay on here till daylight. You can sleep if you want to; me and Mose'll stay up yet a while."

"Thanks," was the other's gruff response.

Without further ado he walked to a corner of the room, shortly to return carrying a compactly wrapped bundle of bedding such as the soldier slings across his shoulders. This he unfastened and proceeded to spread along the floor against the wall, then removed his shoes and lay down. Though the man closed his eyes he did not appear to sleep, and Quill was much inclined to the belief that it was a subterfuge.

Once he himself slipped into a restless nodding and was awakened by a warning growl from Mose. He opened his eyes with a guilty start fully expecting to see his prisoner bearing down on him, but a hasty glance across the room revealed the man sitting up calmly rolling a cigaret. Lighting the cigaret from a live coal raked from the fire he leaned his back against the wall, blowing streamers of smoke through his nostrils with seeming relish.

He ignored Quill completely; captor might as well have been dead and buried for all the attention he got from captive. The cigaret smoked down until Quill wondered how he managed to hold it between his lips, the man flung the stub from him with a nervous flirt of his hand. He looked at Quill for the first time.

"Did you know Gorgan?" he inquired abruptly.

The suddenness of the question startled Quill not a little, and he wet his lips with the tip of his tongue.

"Yes, of course—that is, I knew who he was."

"I mean, did you know him like you know the dog there—his little peculiarities of character and that sort of thing?" insisted the other.

Quill hesitated before replying. Now that it had been called to his attention it occurred to him for the first time that he had not really known Gorgan in the true sense of knowing a person.

Search his memory as he would he was sure of but few facts—one, that Gorgan had come from God alone knew where, had moved into the little house at the edge of town, and there had lived his life alone; again, that his only callers were the tradesmen and an old negro woman who did his washing, and even these knew nothing beyond a few minor details and the man's plainly evinced irascibility; another, that those who had made advances looking toward the forming of a neighborly friendship with the newcomer were repulsed, and it soon became currently understood that Gorgan wished to be left alone.

Once Quill had called at the house in his official capacity, but he had not been invited to enter; his business was transacted through a half-open door. As he now recalled the visit he could remember but one thing that had attracted his attention, and that was the small model of a ship with all sails spread standing on a center table in the front room of the house.

"I didn't think you did," he heard the man saying presently. "And yet, there is nothing remarkable about that: I associated

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with Henry Gorgan for years before I learned what sort of man he really was. God forgive me for calling him a man—he was a beast; a damnable beast—the sort of beast that inflicts suffering on helpless women and children. That was the sort of beast Henry Gorgan was,——his black heart!"

There was a world of invective in his voice as he spoke.

"Yes, beast is the word," he said after an interval in which he stared into the fire and twisted his lips malevolently. "Perhaps if I were to tell you more about Gorgan you would understand why I killed him."

"We have several hours to wait for daylight; a story might help to pass the time," answered Quill with assumed indifference.

The man closed his eyes a moment, and his brows wrinkled.

"IT WAS on the docks at Honolulu that I first met Gorgan," he began presently. "At the time I was skipper and sole owner of the three-masted schooner *Harwich*, a four-hundred ton affair set down in the registrar's book as a miscellaneous trader. I traded chiefly in North and South Pacific waters; that is to say, between the larger ports of the Archipelago and the smaller islands.

"If you know your geography you will readily understand that my field was a large one; the Pacific Register gives something like seven thousand islands, most of them inhabited. While I never got rich at the business, I made a fair living; enough, at least, to provide my wife and baby girl with most of the comforts ashore.

"At times, especially on the shorter trips I made about the islands, I took my family with me, and I saw to it that many of my trips were short trips, for a sailor with a family ashore is a lonesome devil.

"As I said, it was at Honolulu that I met Gorgan; I was waiting the loading of a cargo of pines for Auckland. I had lost my mate the day before to a larger vessel, and Gorgan, being highly recommended to me by a local shipping agent, I signed him on as mate of the *Harwich*. He not only became my mate, but shortly after he bought a fourth interest in the schooner.

"'I've roved about the world till I'm surfeited with it, and I need something to hold me to one line,' he said to me when he broached the proposition of taking an interest in the schooner. I suggested matrimony, but he scorned that; said he was not the marrying kind.

"A detailed account of our affairs during the next few years would not interest you, for they were ordinary enough. We prospered financially and I put most of my surplus earnings in the bank ashore, for I was possessed of the desire with which most men of the sea are possessed—to give up the sea one day and settle down ashore where one finds comfort and safety. Grace and the little girl accompanied me as usual, though now, owing to the well-meant importunities of Gorgan, we made but few short trips for the simple reason that we made more profit out of the long ones.

"At such times as Grace and the baby went along with me Gorgan seemed to withdraw into himself, and though not naturally garrulous, his reticence on such occasions wore on my nerves not a little. It was plain to be seen that the man was antipathic, if not actually hostile, where women were concerned.

"At any rate, he left my women-folk severely alone, eating by himself when he could find proper excuses for the act, and seldom coming aft when we were on deck together.

"I could not complain, however, for a better mate no skipper ever had. He was the very soul of efficiency, and he was efficient in a quiet, unobtrusive sort of way, doing what was to be done with a directness that accomplished results where other methods might have failed.

"He was a well-read man, it didn't take me long to find that out, and being no mean reader myself I frequently coaxed him into spasmodic dissertations by allusions to Browning, a well-thumbed copy of whose poems I once found in his bunk.

"Once, in a rare moment of confidence, he confided to me that in his younger days he had studied medicine, but owing to the untimely death of his father was forced to give it up to care for his widowed mother. A year or so after his mother died, and with no responsibility to hold him in check he took to drink and the sea.

"About seven years ago—no, it is six—time don't matter with me any more—we sailed out of Melbourne with a hold full of sundries for trade with the natives of the islands. Grace and the kid went along,

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for this was to be their last trip in the *Harwich;* on our return I intended to sell out to Gorgan and quit the sea for good. Our itinerary included sailing a circle around Australia, arriving at Melbourne about a year later.

"Our first stop was at Caledonia, and from thence we sailed for the New Hebrides. Thence we sailed a long stretch east to the Fijis. There began our circuit north and west, touching at most of the important islands of the Ellice, Gilbert, Marshall and Ladrone groups. We had huge success all the way, and by the looks of things when we sailed away from the last of the Marshall Islands we stood to clear from five hundred to six hundred per cent. on the venture.

"From the Ladrones we were to work our way down along a chain of islands through the Celebes and Java Seas, thence south and east to Melbourne. But we never arrived at Sandal Wood Island, our last stop before shaping the course for Melbourne."

He ceased speaking and locked his hands about his knees, gazing intently into the fire. By the flickering light of the fire Quill saw the man's eyes narrow to the veriest slits, and his thick fingers fairly dug themselves into the backs of his hands. At length he resumed.

"It is peculiar, now that I have time to think it over, that during the six or seven months we were cruising from one place to another we had seen no heavy weather; during all that time the sea had remained like glass, or when it was what a landsman might call rough it was more the nature of a heavy ground swell that supplied relief from the monotony of sailing over a glass-smooth sea. But all this time Nature was at work; she was storing up energy that she was some day going to turn loose.

"She did turn it loose, too, and though I've seen many a blow in my day, I've never in all my life seen such a blow as came on us when we were but three days out of Guam. And to make matters worse a damnable barometer registered thirty-one and a fraction when it should have registered twenty-eight flat. That devil's gale, or typhoon it was, came on us in the dead of night, literally sneaked up on us and dealt us a blow in the dark like an assassin.

"I had turned in about two bells that night, nine o'clock that is, with a light breeze blowing just about sou'east, which was about four points off our starboard quarter as we sailed. Before I left the deck to go below I hinted to Gorgan, who had the deck till midnight, that if the breeze freshened it might be advisable to shake out the mizzen and tops'ls. It was our custom with a light breeze to loaf along under fore and mains'ls and foretopmast stays'ls.

"As a general rule, however, when I turned the deck over to Gorgan I left him to his own devices, for he was an excellent sailor. It may be that he heeded my hint, and, mistaking the forerunner of the gale as a normal freshening of the breeze, for remember we had a lying barometer, had added the tops'ls and the mizzen. At any rate, about an hour before midnight I was awakened by being pitched bodily from my bunk to the deck, and before I could steady myself another lurch of the schooner sent me sprawling and sliding beneath the bunk.

"I distinctly heard a sharp snapping sound somewhere above me, followed a moment later by a crash as something heavy struck the deck with a noise that filled the cabin like thunder. I didn't need to be told what had happened.

"I got to my feet, and for a moment hesitated between my desire to go to the comfort of my wife and baby, both of whom were screaming for me in the darkness of the cabin, and my duty to go on deck. I realized instinctively, however, that I could best serve them by going on deck and taking charge, and with a few words shouted over my shoulder as I went I made my way to the deck.

"WHEN I reached the deck, after receiving a number of severe bruises in my passage up the narrow hatchway, my eyes beheld a sight that struck terror to my heart. By the uncanny glow of the unceasing flashes of lightning I saw that the fore and main masts were wrecks, the fore snapped short at the deck and the other a little higher up, and both overside trailing along by virtue of their rigging.

"I realized instantly that if we did not get those wrecked masts cut away in short order we would be beyond all help; either of them was capable, at the rate we were pitching and tumbling in the heavy seas now running, of staving a hole in the schooner's side. I saw Gorgan and one or

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two others working like mad with the wreck of the fo'mast.

"To sever a two-inch eighteen-strand wire cable with an ax when your base of leverage is rolling and pitching to all points of the compass—the schooner at times either standing on her stem or stern or scooping her rails under water—is no mean job, and I had my doubts about getting the job finished in time to do any good.

"Fortunately, I had taken the precaution to place axes where they could be found readily in such emergencies as this, and I quickly found one in its rack under the overhang of the deck-house. I tore it loose and leaped to the port rail, or what was left of it, for it was a mass of splinters and twisted iron.

"I shall never know how I finally got that tangle of mast, ripped canvas, and snarled rigging cut away. When I saw it go lunging and plunging away sternward I near cried for joy. Though in its first mad rush the gale had fortunately whipped away enough of our canvas to keep us from turning over, there was still enough left to give us steerageway. Bob Larkins, a young man I had had with me about a year, was at the wheel, and while at times he was completely submerged, he stuck nobly to his post.

"I had just left the rail to make my way inboard, meaning to cling to the deck-house and proceed forward to where Gorgan and his companions were working with the fo'mast, when I lifted my eyes to win'ard. As God is my witness I saw curling up over us a sea that leveled its crest with the mizzen gaff! It seemed to spread itself out above us like some gigantic sea-shell, the flashes of lightning showing a sickly green through its transparency. It seemed to pause for a moment, as if alive and wishing to contemplate momentarily the awful havoc it would create.

"Then it broke and came tumbling down, thousands of tons of roaring, upheaving black water. The noise of its fall actually pained the senses. As it came down I threw myself flat to the deck and clutched blindly for hand hold. Providentially my hand fell on a tackle-bolt in the deck, and I honestly believe I left my finger-prints in the iron.

"As the shattered sea came rushing across the deck I felt the deck-house tremble, stanch though it was. Then it was twisted from its bed and crumpled up like a house of shingles, sweeping over the side in a swirl of black water.

"It is said that the ways of God are wondrous and beyond the understanding of mortals. I was firmly convinced of that that night. Not only was I spared the awful agony of struggling against the wild rush of the sea, a struggle that more often than not is in vain, but it seemed to pass over me with a gentle, soothing motion, whispering mockingly in my ear of what it could do if it so desired. As the sea passed I could hear a series of screams even above the roaring of the gale. I knew what was taking place somewhere out there in that rush of water.

"Somehow or other I managed to stagger to my feet and shake the water from me for all the world like a spaniel in from a swim, then dashed for the wheel. If the schooner ever got directly in the trough of those seas —well, we would last till about the second sea, the third at most. When I finally succeeded in snubbing the flying spokes of the wheel I looked about for Larkins.

"All I saw was his sou'wester spinning crazily around in a whirl of water that sighed and sucked as it tried to find its way down an overburdened scupper. I shot a hasty, fearful glance astern. Poor Larkins was beyond all human assistance. I now turned my whole attention to the business in hand, which was that of combating the most powerful forces of Nature in an effort to keep the schooner from broaching.

"God alone knows how we managed to live through the rest of that fearful night, but we did. Early in the morning, with what seemed like a fiendish scream of rage at being baffled, the gale snapped off the pole of the mizzenmast, and it toppled over to cling and swing like a giant flail against the mast, every minute threatening to break loose and create further damage to our weakened vessel.

"At last daylight began to smear the sky in the east, the day at last bursting into bloom like a great yellow flower, and a blessed sight it was. To fight for one's life in the broad light of day is hard; to fight in the blackness of night is terrible. As if in anger at the elements at having put such a blight upon the world, the sun drove the yellow-green clouds before it, and by noon the sky was one of those dead blue

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skies from whose clean surface every vestige of cloud seemed to have been erased.

"Of the two females and the eight males on the schooner the night before when the storm broke over us there remained the two females, Gorgan, a seaman by the name of Gregg, and myself. Of these Gregg had a slightly sprained ankle, Gorgan had a piece of flesh and skin the size of your hand torn from his right cheek when he was hurled against the rail, and my wife had a broken finger.

"Though the sea was still running high, combers breaking over the fo'c'sl and washing back along the length of the deck to go cascading over the stern, I thought it was safe, in view of the comparatively gentle wind that followed in the wake of the gale, to lash the wheel and go below for a rest.

"Our galley, for we did all our cooking in the deck-house, had gone over the side, so we boiled a pot of strong coffee over a little spirit lamp in the cabin. There was little chance to prepare an elaborate meal culled from the wreck of the storeroom forward, so we made a meal of coffee, some biscuit, and a can of jam my wife found in a locker in the cabin. The meal over we sat in session to decide on what course to pursue.

"Gorgan was for bending a spare sail on the wreck of the mizzenmast and laying the shortest course for Guam, our last port of call; but Gregg, who sat in the council with equal authority, and I overruled him. Storms move in circles and are as contrary and uncertain as auxiliary engines, and I did not care to risk running into a second storm with a weakened mizzenmast as our only safeguard.

"My plan, and I was upheld by Gregg, was to make our way to the nearest land, wherever that might be, and stay there until we could set up reliable jury-masts to take the place of those we had lost. How long this would require there was no way of telling; with but three men to accomplish the task I calculated on two months at least. As we had plenty of food and fresh water there was no hindrance there.

"'"'TIS a fool's trick, man, and you'll live to regret it,' said Gorgan rather angrily when the final vote showed that he had lost. 'While we're fiddling along with jury-masts we could be making good time to Guam where we could have the job done right. You'll regret it, mark me.'

"With that he left the cabin. At noon I shot the sun. I found that we were in latitude 9° 48' North and 148° 15' East from Greenwich. I figured our position on the chart and discovered that the nearest land was Michleson's Island.

"A period with the Pacific Register informed me that Michleson's Island was an atoll, oval in shape, three miles long by a mile and a half wide, with a single cluster of palms on its southern rim; two entrances, one at the eastern end giving passage to small ships' boats at high tide, the other at the western end giving passage to vessels of a thousand tons or less at any stage of water; uninhabitated; no fresh water. Not a very nice place, but any port in a storm, or after a storm I should say.

"Laying our course for Michleson's Island, then, we arrived about noon of the next day, our speed being about three knots an hour. Of how we labored the two weeks following there is little need to tell; enough to say, that when we threw ourselves in our bunks at night after gulping the meal Grace prepared for us, we were completely exhausted.

"If you have never attempted to rig two strong jury-masts made from spare spars got at great pains from the cramped hold of a four-hundred-ton schooner in a blazing sun, stepping them with the aid of shears and tackle operated solely by hand power, to say nothing of what is to follow in the way of splicing wire cable at the cost of lacerated hands, then you have fortunately been spared the horrors of heart-breaking toil.

"In spite of the suffering and hardships we endured, however, we were comparatively cheerful; that is to say, all but Gorgan. It appeared that theretofore I had not known the man, knowing only that part of him which responded to an environment of serenity and comparative peace; under stress he was an entirely different character. That he was a vindictive sort of man was easily to be seen. For days at a stretch he would not open his mouth in speech, and though Gregg and I kept up a continual fire of aimless conversation and singing, more to buoy up our own spirits than anything else, Gorgan never showed by word or sign that he paid us any attention.

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"He lived in a world apart, meeting us only on the common ground of endeavor at the jury-masts. He offered no suggestions himself as to how the work should proceed, but often I caught him looking at the work accomplished in a sneering sort of way that spoke volumes.

" 'Henry,' I said one evening as we were momentarily standing on the fo'c'sl looking at the work while Grace was putting supper on the table in the cabin, 'if you don't like the way things are moving why in —— don't you speak up like a man and state your grievance? If you don't care to do that for God's sake don't criticize!'

"For a moment he looked at me, and I saw fire kindling in his eyes; then without a word, with only that sneering expression on his face, he turned and walked away. As the rim of the lagoon went almost sheer into the water we were moored against the very coral itself, and to facilitate passage from the schooner to the shore we had rigged a short gangplank. I watched Gorgan until he had stepped ashore and walked a mile or so up the lagoon and disappeared within the clump of palms, then I went below in no good humor.

"When I turned in an hour later he had not returned, and I instructed Grace to leave something for him on the cabin table. I recite this much merely to show you the attitude of the man during those days when, if ever, we should have worked in harmony and accord. His wanderings away at the close of the working day after that first time thereafter became a common sight, and shortly we would have been much surprised had he offered to sit at table with us.

"Even during the day he would suddenly throw down his tools and cease work, and, without a word of explanation, walk away on one of his trips to the palms. Gregg was for forcing him to do his share of the work whether or no, but I thought it best not to antagonize him, for there was no way of telling what the man might do in the way of retaliation.

"It was apparent that he was laboring under the delusion that he was abused by the rest of us, and in a way he had become a fanatic on that subject. At any rate, it was clear that the rejection of his plan of action following the storm still rankled in his breast.

"Well, we had the fore jury-mast set up and securely anchored by a series of fore and aft stays and modified shrouds, and were starting on the main when my wife suddenly fell sick. At first I thought her illness was merely the natural result of the experiences she had gone through, beginning with the night of the storm and culminating with the perversity of Gorgan, for, woman that she was, she worried considerably about him.

"But when that night she began to get delirious and talk out of her head I knew that the ailment was more serious than I had suspected. I offered her relief from the few simple remedies we carried in the medicine chest, but instead of helping her they seemed to augment the malady. She got steadily worse and I became panicky. Gregg, too, complained of a splitting headache and went off to his bunk in the forward part of the schooner to sleep it off.

"IT WAS about dawn when I went on deck again, going there for no reason in the world that I knew of, and saw Gorgan on the fo'c'sl looking critically at the finished fore jury-mast. In my anxiety over my wife's condition, for she had had a bad night of it, I flew into a rage at sight of Gorgan's sneering face, and began to pour a torrent of curses over his head. Then in the midst of that it came to me like a flash—Gorgan had studied medicine!

"If any man within a thousand miles could help Grace, Gorgan was that man. The flow of profanity ceased abruptly and I fairly ran to him, tears of gratitude standing in my eyes.

" 'Gorgan—for God's sake! My wife—she is sick—help her!' I cried.

"He turned his cold eyes on me indifferently and I wished for the power to strike him dead where he stood.

" 'Your wife—she is sick?' he said slowly, as if not comprehending what I had said.

" 'Yes—sick! For the sake of Christ! Come!'

"I grabbed him by the arm and literally pulled him aft along the deck to the cabin hatch, and he followed me down the ladder and into the cabin where my wife lay on a couch. I noticed that she was deathly pale, and so quiet that I thought she was dead. My heart stopped beating. But no; I saw her hand twitch, then reach out feebly for the baby who was lying at her

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side watching the white face of its mother with a child's dumbness and inability to understand.

"Gorgan looked at Grace for a moment, then passed swiftly to the couch and caught up her hand, feeling her pulse. Suddenly he looked very closely into her face and started back as if impelled by an invisible force. He hastily dropped her hand and wiped his own on his dirty clothes with a loathing gesture. He stood staring at her like one bereft, then turned on me.

" 'When did she first notice this?'

"I told him.

" 'And you said nothing to me?' If looks would kill I would be a dead man, for a more venomous expression I have never seen on the face of a human being. 'You fool! You poor —— fool!' he snarled. 'The medicine chest—quick!'

"I grabbed it from the rack where it stood and thrust it into his hands. He placed it on the table and threw back the lid with such force that the hinges snapped short off. I noticed that his fingers trembled violently as he groped here and there in the box, picking up the little vials and looking at the labels, tumbling them on the table in confusion with no attempt to replace them in order. At length he selected one of the vials.

" 'Water!' he ordered thickly.

"I sprang for the scuttle-butt out in the passageway and quickly returned with a glass of water. Into this he dropped several drops of a yellowish liquid from the vial and handed the glass to me, shoving the vial into his pocket.

" 'Quick—give her this!'

" 'Hadn't you better—' I began, but he cut me off with a savage oath.

" 'Take it, fool—she's yours!' He shot a shrinking glance at the couch.

"I took the glass meekly and went over to the couch, lifted my wife's head and poured the stuff down her throat. A moment she opened her eyes, then closed them again and sank back with a contented sigh. I turned again to find Gorgan staring at me, his eyes burning themselves into my very soul.

" 'What is it?' I managed to gasp.

"He hesitated the bare fraction of a second before replying, then said—

" 'White Fever.'

"I can remember now that as he said it he bit his lying lips until they showed white under the pressure of his swinish teeth. He said nothing more, but turned on his heel and strode from the cabin. I thought I heard a cackling, half-wild laugh as he made his way along the passageway and went on deck, but was not sure. 'What a fool I have been!' I told myself over and over when he had gone, to get worked up over nothing at all.

"I laughed happily at the thought of it and went over and kissed Grace on her white forehead. It was hot and feverish to my lips, but that was quite natural, I reasoned, in one stricken with White Fever, a vexatious but not a dangerous disease peculiar to the Caucasian in the South Seas. That night I slept on the deck of the cabin in order that I might be near Grace should she want anything.

"Once, it must have been near midnight, I heard a noise in the passageway just beyond the door. 'Gorgan getting his usual nightly supper,' I told myself, and turned over and was soon asleep.

"When I again wakened the sun was streaming in through the deck-lights overhead. I glanced toward the couch and saw that Grace and the baby were still asleep, Grace with her arms about the child. A pang shot through me when I noticed that she was unusually pale, but consoled myself with the reflection that it was merely one of the effects of the fever.

"The air in the cabin was stifling, so I went out in the passageway and started up the ladder to the deck, meaning to look up Gregg and see how he was getting along, for I had not laid eyes on him for hours. Fastened on the hatch-combing a piece of fluttering paper caught my eye. I was on the point of tearing it off and crumpling it in my hand preparatory to throwing it over the side, when I saw that it was neatly folded and had my name inscribed on one side.

"Slowly, in fear, for I was suddenly possessed with the feeling of an impending danger, I opened the paper and read. It was from Gorgan.

> I lied to you. Your wife had contracted Asiatic cholera. You should have sailed for Guam as I advised. I have taken the only medicine aboard that would have cured her. There was not enough for two and I want to live. I also needed the chart and other things. Good luck.

"As I read I could feel the blood leave my face, and had I not caught at the hatch I surely would have fallen. Unable to

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guide my steps, for I was in a daze, I stumbled down the ladder, and supporting myself against the bulkheads arrived at last at the cabin I had so recently left. The sleepers still slept. I staggered to the couch where they lay and stood looking down at them for many minutes, my vision distorted by a thick veil of tears.

"I went on deck after that, and in the port waterway found Gregg. He, too, was sleeping. I do not remember that as I looked at him I felt sorrow or pity; it seemed that when I looked into the white faces of my wife and baby all sense of compassion died within me.

"I can remember, however, for it was seared into my brain as if with a white-hot iron, that when I turned my head and looked at the spot where we had kept our only remaining ship's boat and found it gone—when I turned my head still further and gazed out over the waste of water—when I sensed my fingers clutching the message from the man who was out there somewhere on that waste of water seeking safety in flight, literally carrying my wife's and baby's lives in a little vial in his dirty pocket—I do remember that when those things occurred there welled up in my heart a feeling that has grown on and obsessed me day and night, feeding upon itself like some malignant cancer of the soul.

"It was a longing and a craving to rectify a wrong, a mad desire to assuage the pain that smote me when I laid to rest beneath the coral rocks of Michleson's Island the dead bodies of my wife and child.

"Of my wanderings from that time I have kept neither written nor mental record; I came and I went as the fit seized me. At times I stumbled across the track of my man only to lose it again. How I came at last to this place I do not know. Perhaps news of the man reached me through an old lady who lives farther up-State who was kind enough to give me a breakfast in return for some work I did for her.

"As I ate she told me of a strange man with an ugly scar the size of your hand on his right cheek who lived alone in a little house next to her sister in Mercer. Then, perhaps, God Almighty set one of my feet before the other. I do not know."

He stopped and pulled a scrap of dirty paper from his pocket, looked at it absently and musingly for a time, then tossed it to the fire with a sort of lethargy and watched it burn to a few feathery ashes.

"Well, that's all, Mr. Sheriff," he finished.

AS HE ceased speaking Quill reached out and hugged the dog close to him. The man smoothed his bed and lay down, a contented sigh escaping his lips, and as he closed his eyes there was the faintest trace of a smile about the corners of his mouth.

It was broad day when he opened his eyes again and sat bolt upright to find Quill and the dog gone. He got up and went to the door, then stepped outside in the dew-wet grass looking all about him. There was nothing to be seen or heard except a little wren hopping from branch to branch in a near-by bush and the soft whisper of the morning breeze through the trees. Shortly he turned and went back into the shack.

On the ledge overhanging the valley from which the evening before he had discovered the column of smoke, Quill sat down to rest. He gazed long and earnestly at the almost imperceptible opening in the tree-tops where he knew the shack to stand.

"Mose," he said at length, "ain't it curious how a man can be fooled by appearances? Now I would have sworn that there was a shack somewhere up there, but there ain't."

He ruminated for a time.

"Anyhow, Mose, I reckon you and me'll remember this trip, because it's the only one we ever made when we didn't get our man. What's that? Mose, you're lying like a dog. We ain't seen a soul since we left town. Get along there, you old liar!"

And Mose obediently got along toward town.

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HIDDEN TRAILS

A FIVE-PART STORY

CONCLUSION

WILLIAM PATTERSON WHITE

Author of "Paradise Bend," "Longhorns," etc.

CHAPTER XXII

"I WEEL not! I tell you, Johnny, I weel not go to Marysville for de warrant un let you go aftair. Speel un Skeeny. I go wit' you."

Laguerre scowled across the room at his friend, who was sitting in the middle of his cot hugging his knees.

"Have it yore own way," said Johnny. "I've seen mules now an' then, but o' course we wasn't talkin' o' mules, was we? Lordy, listen to her rain! We could be trailin' that red-head jigger now if it wasn't for the rain. I dunno what luck is any more. Sling us a match, will yuh, Telescope?"

"Dere y'are. Nevair you min' about Meestair Camp. She weel come latair Jus' now eet ees Speel un Skeeny—un jus' now I wan' for sleep. Dat train she pull out een t'ree hour."

The rain had stopped when the two got off the train at Diamond. Johnny's Piegan City mount was busily cropping grass in the neighborhood of the spring. Johnny caught him up and rode to a small ranch five miles west to hire a horse for Laguerre. He was back in an hour and a half with the horse and a supply of food.

In the first of the morning light they were riding southward on the trail of Stevens' posse.

"Dead or alive, the notice said." Johnny's mouth was a straight line.

"Two t'ousand dollar apiece," chimed in Laguerre, his black eyes bright with anticipation.

In all justice it must be said the half-breed was thinking not so much of the money as he was of the lively excitement he was riding into. Harper and Skinny would certainly put up some kind of a fight. Laguerre had no fear of the outcome. Neither had Johnny. There could be no mercy for men aiding and abetting such a hold-up as the one near Diamond.

Four days later they found the posse combing the breaks of the Lost Soldier, but they did not find Spill Harper and Skinny Devinney. These two, said Harmer, were scouting to the eastward. They had left the main party on the second day. Harmer did not ask the reason for Johnny's solicitude respecting the two men from the Bend, but his old eyes were shrewdly speculative.

Nothing was said to Sheriff Stevens or the others of the turpitude of Spill and

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Skinny. It would be common property sufficiently soon. Besides, the size of a reward is not increased by division.

Sheriff Stevens and all of the posse save Jack Murgatroyd were about ready to go home when Johnny and Laguerre came upon them. Most of them had little businesses of their own that would suffer should they remain away for any length of time. It was the Government's money anyway. They had not discovered a single clue to the identity of the robbers, and they had long since lost the trail. Indeed, they lost it twenty miles south of the railroad. Now, after the rain, further searching was hopeless. It is ridiculously easy, when the first enthusiasm has worn off, to find excuses for not doing a certain thing.

The posse turned back, and Murgatroyd left them to ride his own line. He had voiced his belief that the road-agents had swung off toward the country south of Fort Seymour. There was a very wild jumble of perpendicular scenery. According to Murgatroyd it was a good place to hide in.

Reaching Diamond Stevens and his men went east on a local freight. Johnny and Laguerre, waiting for No. 3, entered the saloon that catered to travelers and found Harmer leaning against the bar.

"Yore train's gone," said Johnny.

Harmer shook his white head.

"Not mine," he smiled placidly. "I ain't lost any trains. Sent my hoss back on it though. Sort o' thought I'd prospect 'round here a spell. Lively li'l mee-tropolis, this town. Have a drink."

Later, crossing the road, Harmer turned his quizzical eyes on Johnny.

"I'm figurin' on goin' west," he said slowly. "I dunno as I think much o' that country south o' Seymour. Livin' on a ranch is so kind o' doleful, an' here's a chance for action. Besides, the railroad chunkers in them wrecked cars never had a chance. A gent ought to have an even break for his alley. An' them hold-ups didn't give no even break. Djuh know they found a piece o' that baggay-man's heels, an' not another smidgin' of him? I didn't like that." His eye-corners puckered and the steady hands stroked the long white beard. "Maybe I'm takin' too much for granted, gents. Maybe—maybe yore interest in this case is ended."

"Not a li'l bit," cried Johnny heartily. "We're shore a heap interested."

"Y' bet you, Meestair Harmair," was the half-breed's contribution.

"I'm glad," said Harmer simply. "I shore do enjoy playin' out any hand I pick up."

"An' that's one right good rule," said Johnny Ramsay.

So Mr. Harmer went with them to Damson. There he said he guessed he'd get him a horse and meander 'round a spell. Johnny suggested that he ride north with them. He was beginning to have doubts concerning Mr. Harmer. There was something secretive about the old fellow. Perhaps... Johnny watched Mr. Harmer very closely.

They pushed their horses to the limit on the northward trail. Twice between Damson and Marysville they passed small parties riding south to join a Federally hired posse hunting the road-agents. From one of these they learned that word had been sent to Fort Yardley and Fort Seymour and that four more troops of cavalry would be out within a week.

"Which them hold-ups ain't got a chance," their informant flung back over his shoulder as he rode on after his outfit.

"No," said Johnny gently, "I guess not."

Harmer chuckled, and accurately spat tobacco juice on a small rock.

"Them fellers must be a-laughin' themselves sick about now," he observed. "Fifty thousand dollars an' whatever else was in them ordinary express sacks. My Gawd, it's so —— easy to fool a sheriff she's a wonder they's an honest man left in the world."

The old cynic chuckled again. The perturbed Johnny watched him like a cat.

JUDGE ALLISON was taking the air in the shade of his front porch when the three men rode into Marysville. At sight of them he uttered a joyful cry and ran out into the street.

"Bat Harmer!" he bawled. "Y' old scoundrel!"

To this remarkable greeting Harmer made response by jumping from his horse with a whoop and beating the judge upon his broadcloth shoulders.

"I was just a-comin' to see you, Bill," he said. "I thought I'd better. My friends here are suspicious of me. They think I'm somethin' I ain't. Tell 'em I am."

"Why, Johnny, how could you?" reproved

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the judge. "And Telescope Laguerre too, who should know better."

"I dunno what yo're talkin' about," Johnny disclaimed, his face reddening smartly, while Laguerre grinned.

"Don't blame yuh," smiled Harmer. "I did kind o' horn in on yore privacy some. But I wanted to see this deal through, an' I ain't joyful none about playin' a lone hand. I like folks to talk to. That's the kind of a hairpin I am."

Like Harmer? A man couldn't help it. They all went up on the judge's front porch where there was good cheer in a bottle and good feeling in the air.

There was much to tell the judge. He made no bones about issuing warrants for Barry Camp, Spill Harper and Skinny Devinney.

"I'll issue them at once," said he. "Evidence is more than enough. I should say so—no, I haven't seen any of them. They wouldn't ride through here. Not now. I'm sorry you weren't closer to Bale and Tom. You see, you can't actually identify them as the men who bushwhacked you."

"If I'd been closer to 'em they wouldn't need warrants," Johnny said naively. "But it don't matter. They'll come alive again some'ers."

"Will they stay alive?" queried the judge.

"Well," said Johnny, "yuh know yoreself she's a hard world. Another thing, Judge: I told that Piegan City operator an' the one at Diamond not to talk, but o' course they will an' what we know everybody else'll know soon an' sudden. But they's no sense in showin' our hand till we gotta. Will yuh keep them warrants a while till—till we bring in the beef?"

"Good idea," nodded Judge Allison. "I will."

The three rode on to Farewell. There were few men in sight. Sheriff Rule, it seemed, had organized the majority of the citizens into a posse and was riding the country between Longhorn Mountain and Cutter. For Chance Blaisdell had brought Sheriff Rule a message from Sheriff Stahl to the effect that the escaped killer, Hen Riley, had doubled south.

"Guess it's the hoss more'n Hen that's botherin' the sheriff," observed Johnny. "Shore thinks a heap o' that cayuse, Bill Stahl does."

They forsook the trail at Farewell and rode northeast, their objective the Harper ranch-house on Dry Creek. They rode the cañon and the draws, and reconnoitered the place by night from the direction of the Medicine Mountains.

"No light nowhere," remarked Harmer.

"Guess we might's well wait for daylight," said Johnny Ramsay.

They waited—lying down-wind among the pines at the back of the ranch. This that the small dog, Biscuit, might not scent their presence. At the first light they approached the house by way of the corral. They did not burst in the back door. They didn't have to. The latch-string was out. Johnny pulled it, and pushed the door open. There were no indignant yaps. No dog was in the house. Nor was any human being. Nor were there any firearms. Which last pleased Johnny.

It would have disappointed him beyond measure to have found in the house the 40-65 with which he had shot against Spill Harper and Skinny Devinney. Leaving the house, Johnny looked under the bench beside the kitchen door. Half-hidden by the leg of the bench, a spent shell lay in the pale grass. Under the bulge of the foundation log on the other side of the doorway was another spent shell. Johnny called Harmer's attention to these two cartridge cases. He did not touch them himself.

"Would yuh mind pickin' up them spent shells, an' puttin' 'em in yore pocket?" he asked. "I'd do it myself only I'd rather have a third party do it. It—it might look better sometime. Take a good look at 'em while yo're at it."

Harmer picked up the shells and turned them 'round and 'round in his palm. He dropped the shells into a pocket of his coat and looked at Johnny.

"I guess maybe yo're figurin' on them empties comin' in handy later," he remarked.

"I guess maybe," said Johnny Ramsay, laying his rifle in the hollow of his arm and fishing out the makings.

As they were constructing their cigarets there galloped from the woods the dog, Biscuit, with rabbit-fur on his whiskers and assaulted their ankles. They fended him off with all gentleness, for he was a small animal, but he followed them with savage snarls while they examined the ground 'roundabout.

"Nobody been here for t'ree week," declared Laguerre when he had looked at the sign in the corral. "Guess we go."

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"Might's well be the Bend," said Johnny. "Tom Keen an' Bale have friends there. It's just possible——"

He did not finish the sentence. Harmer smiled. He thoroughly approved of Johnny Ramsay.

Three tired men on three tired horses, they rode the length of Paradise Bend's Main Street and unsaddled at the hotel corral.

"Le's go see Racey," suggested Johnny when they had flung down their saddles and bridles in a corner of the hotel barroom.

But Racey had seen them ride in, and he was upon them before they reached the street. Racey reported, between swallows, that the red-head, Bale Harper and Tom Keen had not returned to Paradise Bend.

"Slay in town?" asked Johnny in a whisper.

"Shore is. Swapped drinks with him this mornin'—huh? Mrs. Wallace? Y' betcha. Run the wheel last night. Watcha wanna know about her for. I thought——"

"Nemmine whatcha thought," cautioned Johnny. "Not so —— loud."

They were down at the end of the bar, far removed from the other customers, but Racey's voice was prone to rise, and Johnny was a fearful soul.

"Get off my toe!" cried Racey. "Stand on yore own hoof, yuh splay-footed mule! Whatcha so partic'lar for anyhow about—yore liquor?" he amended wisely, taking note of the peculiar gleam that had suddenly crept into Johnny eyes.

"Didja say Slay was in the Broken Dollar?" asked Johnny.

"I didn't, but he is. Hey! Where yuh goin'?"

But Johnny was already gone. Racey turned his head. Laguerre, Harmer and Soapy Ragsdale were listening to a story the bartender was telling. Racey hitched up his pants, shifted his holster forward a trifle, and went out.

JOHNNY did not hurry down to the Broken Dollar. He walked quite casually, turned in at the saloon doorway, and went to the bar. Slay was standing behind the bar talking to the bartender. He nodded briefly to Johnny and himself set a bottle and a glass before him.

Both Slay's hands rested palms flat on the wood. But the gambler was a wizard with a gun. Johnny canted the bottle with his left hand.

"I didn't know you were left-handed," was Slay's dry comment.

"I am—sometimes," replied Johnny, and drank left-handed.

Slay smiled.

"It's a queer world—sometimes," he said, and swept Johnny's money into the cash-drawer.

He again rested his palms flat on the bar. His face was inscrutable. The baffled Johnny departed.

"He's shore a deep one," Johnny told himself. "They's no tellin' whether she told him or not. Wish she would—or somethin'. I'd like to get it over with."

In the street he came upon Racey. That young man was just starting to walk away from one of the windows. Johnny overtook him in one stride.

"Nice day," said Racey guiltily.

"Whadda you wanta mix in for?" asked Johnny directly.

"Well, that Slay might 'a' cold-decked yuh," defended Racey. "Yo're so —— careless. Yuh know y'are."

"Y' old son of a gun," said Johnny, and affectionately smote his guardian-angel between the shoulder-blades with a force that made him stagger.

"She's a hour to supper," Racey observed, returning the blow with interest, and dodging Johnny's counter. "I'm thirsty. I didn't get no drink at the Broken Dollar," he added pointedly.

"Yuh don't need one," declared Johnny "My Gawd, Racey, yo're a sot now. The last thing Jack Richie says to me was to look out for yuh an' keep yuh away from the red-eye. Honest, Racey, yore face right this minute is one fine advertisement for most any saloon."

"Is that so?" was Racey's crushing repartee. "Is that so? You ain't no pro-prog-prognosticker yore own self."

"Ha-ha," cried Johnny, affecting to be overcome with mirth, "listen to the man. Say, some time yo're a-goin' to strangle usin' these big words yuh dunno the meanin' of. Lemme tell yuh, you uneducated goat, a feller that don't drink is a probationer. Now run along an' don't disturb papa no more, that's a good li'l feller."

Leaving Racey speechless with emotion, Johnny walked away rapidly. He was going to the Burr residence, and hoped to find Dorothy in and her mother out. His hope was realized both ways.

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"Hello, stranger," smiled Dorothy, delicately tilting the cover of the saucepan in which peas were bubbling. "How the years have changed you."

"I can't say that for you," said Johnny, with his most engaging grin. "You get better-lookin' every day. It's—it's shore amazin'."

"Amazing?" She lifted her curving eyebrows at this. "Not in the least. I was always a handsome girl. We get more and more beautiful as we grow older, we Burrs, I can't help it. It runs in the family."

"That listens fine. I—I—I——"

"Ye-es?" Sweetly, with a rising inflection.

"I was just wonderin' if—if—" Here Johnny bogged down completely, and nervously kicked the table.

"For Heaven's sake, stop battering the furniture and tell me what's on your mind! Here, stand out in the middle of the floor, where your feet can't reach."

He stood out meekly, fumbling his hat, red to the ears, hot as to his head, but with a clammy coldness chilling his backbone. How did a man propose, anyway? What did he say? What was there to say? Johnny perspired freely, gazing haggardly at Dorothy. His knees shook a little. He hadn't realized that it would be anything like this. But Dorothy had to be saved from the horrific fate of marriage with Harry Slay. There were no two ways about that. Johnny had not intended offering himself as a sacrifice quite so soon, but the sight of the man standing in the Broken Dollar, with the Lord only knew what tale of crimes to his discredit, had forced his hand.

"I—I been thinkin' it over," he began desperately, seeing Dorothy as through a glass, darkly, "an' I been thinkin'—I been thinkin'——"

"Seems to me you said that before, didn't you?" Thus helpfully the lady, sitting down on the edge of the table and swinging a pretty ankle.

"I been thinkin'——"

"For Heaven's sake, Johnny, where does it hurt the most? Do you have 'em often? What you need is sulfur and molasses. I know it's a little late in the Summer for a Spring tonic, but it's the only thing we have handy. Sit down, do, like a nice boy, and take things easy. Try not to think."

"I been——"

"If you say 'I been thinking' again I'll scream. Begin again—in some other part of the dictionary."

The goaded Johnny spread his legs and flapped a hand at her. As he grew angry, he became correspondingly cooler.

"Look here," he said distinctly, "you ain't gonna marry Harry Slay."

Dorothy stared. Then she smiled very oddly.

"Ain't I?" she asked.

"No, you ain't. You been goin' 'round with him too much as it is."

"Have I?" With suspicious sweetness.

Johnny, as has been said, knew not the ways of woman. Her mental processes were to him a sealed book. That he was adopting entirely the wrong tone with Dorothy did not occur to him for a moment. Hurriedly, with the utmost confidence, he rushed on to his doom.

"I ain't gonna see yuh make a fool o' yourself with a man like that," declared Johnny. "Yo're gonna marry me."

"What is this—a proposal?" demanded Dorothy smilelessly.

"Shore." Now he had said it, Johnny felt a deal better.

"As a proposer," Dorothy said judicially, "you're a first-class cow-puncher. This way out."

She had slid from the table and one bare arm pointed at the kitchen door. Johnny's jaw dropped. This wasn't the way it worked out in books. She should have thrown her arms 'round his neck or something. Was he being turned down? He was. Dorothy left no room for doubt.

"I—" he began.

"Shut up!" she cried, and stamped her foot. "You and your 'I's!' You march right out that door and stay out and don't you come back."

"But—but——"

"If you say another word I'll—I'll box your ears. Git!"

Johnny got.

When he was gone, Dorothy slammed the door with vicious force. She looked wildly and unseeingly into the mirror on the wall, then slumped down on a chair beside the table, laid her head on her arms, and began to cry.

She was still weeping into the tablecloth when her mother came in five minutes later. Mrs. Burr dumped her bundles on the table. Dorothy sat up, wiping her eyes forlornly. Mrs. Burr had met Johnny on his way to

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Main Street. He had not seen her. She had noted the sulky expression on his face and that he was swearing under his breath.

"What's the matter, Dot?" she asked.

"Bub-burnt my arm," was the pat reply.

"Oh." A pause, then another "Oh," and Mrs. Burr proceeded to open her bundles, while Dorothy sniffled and tried to choke down the catch in her breath.

"Didn't I meet Johnny Ramsay comin' away from here?" Mrs. Burr said suddenly.

"Did you?" sniffed Dorothy.

"I never knowed you to cry for a burn before," persisted Mrs. Burr.

"Well, you'd better believe I wasn't crying on account of Johnny Ramsay!" exclaimed Dorothy, and got up and ran stumblingly out of the kitchen into her own room.

The closing of her door shook the house. Mrs. Burr heard the creak of bedsprings and the strangled sound of sobbing.

"Poor young ones," sighed Mrs. Burr. "What a lot they got to learn."

Which remark might mean anything.

CHAPTER XXIII

A BURRO BRAYS

JOHNNY went straight from the Burr home to the hotel and drank six whiskies in succession. But he was so angry that the liquor had no more kick than so much water. Furthermore, so engrossing were his thoughts, that he forgot to invite his friends to drink with him. The bar might have been unlined for all the attention he paid to the lining.

From the hotel barroom Johnny went to the house of Jim Mace. Big Jim was just sitting down to supper.

"Set," invited the plump and hospitable Mrs. Mace. "They's twice as much steak there as Jim'll eat."

"I'd shore enjoy to, Mis' Mace," said Johnny, "but I'm in a—I gotta go way. Jim, my hoss needs a rest, an' I gotta go some'ers. Lend me yore red hoss, will yuh?"

Within fifteen minutes Johnny was astride the red horse. He rode his own saddle and Daisy Belle cuddled in her scabbard under his right leg. He was loping along Main Street, heading for the trail to Rocket at the south, when he bethought him of his promise to Mrs. Wallace.

"——," he grunted, "if I gotta, I gotta." He turned his horse toward the river.

But Mrs. Wallace was not at home, and Johnny splashed thankfully across the Dog-soldier. He had not been keen for the interview.

That whole night he rode the Rocket trail. Not till toward morning did the angry soreness quit his injured sensibilities. But it left in its place an odd feeling of great personal loss. The feeling grew stronger and stronger. Johnny had not realized that he cared so much for Dorothy. In time the feeling of loss became an ache, a large and healthy ache, that made him acutely wretched. When he reached Rocket and Dave Sinclair's hotel Johnny Ramsay knew what it was to be a blighted being.

"I'll get them road-agents," he told himself vindictively, "an' I'll get 'em good. I was just foolin' 'round before, but now I'm gonna have a real party."

A blighted being is frequently possessed of an almost uncontrollable desire to perform daring deeds and all that sort of thing, thus showing the blighter what she lost by her inconsiderate action.

The blighted one ate his supper in such sullen silence that Dave Sinclair was annoyed. This was not like Johnny at all. He had tried several subjects, but Johnny had not bitten once. He had monosyllabled extensively and eaten at the same ratio. For his last meal had been a short dinner the previous day, and even unhappiness can not continuously destroy the appetite of a healthy young man who spends most of his time in the saddle.

Dave Sinclair slid another dish of beans across the table, and hopefully began anew.

"Funny how Hen Riley come to escape?" he remarked.

"Ain't he been dumped yet?" Johnny asked indifferently.

"He ain't an' he won't—not on Bill Stahl's hoss," said Dave emphatically. "Tell yuh somethin', Johnny. Somebody let that jigger out. Yessir, you can't tell me. The door o' that calaboose was unlocked *by a key*."

"That's shore an odd number. A key, huh? I always thought they unlocked doors with a shovel."

"I mean somebody got Bill's keys an' unlocked that door. An' Hen ain't got any friends here either. That's what makes it so funny. Who stole the —— key?"

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"Don't lookit me so suspicious, Dave. I didn't steal it. Who did steal it?"

"How'd I know? But it's shore funny. The sheriff's so —— mad he swears he'll chase Hen from —— to breakfast an' back till he gets his hoss. Hen was shore a fool to take that hoss. He might 'a' knowed Bill wouldn't like it."

Johnny's interest in the jail delivery was but momentary. He relapsed into silence and a cigaret. Later he went to bed and slept till supper time.

In the twilight he mounted his horse and rode on. The red, with ten hours' rest behind him, moved springily. Johnny's plan was to go to Farewell first. From there he meant to work east across the range of the Cross-in-a-box to the Double-Diamond-A and the Hogpen. From the two latter ranches he would comb the country north to the Medicine Mountains and the Harper Ranch. It was a sufficiently foolhardy enterprise to carry through on one's "high lonesome," for the party he was trailing in all probability numbered ten men by now. But Johnny was in no mood for company.

He did not follow the trail. He took the shortest way. The rising sun shone down upon him as he forded the headwaters of Crow Creek seven or eight miles from Cooley's ranch. To Cooley's ranch he rode for breakfast and a sleep on the Cooley porch.

Breakfast was long over when Johnny reached the ranch, but Mrs. Cooley promptly sliced bacon and set the coffee on to boil. Mr. Cooley joined him in a cup. Visitors were rare at the Cooley ranch.

After breakfast Johnny sat on the porch with Mr. Cooley. Above Johnny's head a double-cinch packsaddle, burro-sawbuck tree, hung against the wall. The breeching, hanging down, made a convenient arm-rest.

"Get out o' here!" It was the voice of Mrs. Cooley speaking from the kitchen door.

The command was supplemented by a splash as of thrown water. 'Round the corner of the house skipped a frowsy gray burro, not too old, rapidly twiddling indignant ears. The burro's head was dripping wet.

He walked up to the porch, pointed his ears, and stared at Mr. Cooley. Mr. Cooley combed his whiskers, his faded blue eyes half closed. The burro elevated his nose and brayed terrifically. After which he again pointed his ears and looked expectant.

"Want yore chaw, huh?" queried Mr. Cooley, twisting his body so that he could reach down into a deep hip-pocket.

He produced a slab of chewing tobacco haggled off a jagged corner, and tossed it at the burro. The animal caught it in his mouth with expert ease, shook his head ecstatically, then trotted off to where the grass grew green and tender behind the corral.

"Ain't he a jo-darter?" exclaimed Mr. Cooley admiringly. "Took me three weeks to find out it was tobacker he wanted when he talked like that."

"Three weeks," murmured Johnny, his eyes on the left hip of the retreating burro. "I never knowed you had a Arizona Canary."

"I ain't—Julius ain't mine. He belongs to a prospector that stayed here awhile. The gent rode away final, an' a week later Julius, pack an' all, come hee-hawin, to the kitchen door. So I unpacks him—there's his saddle behind yuh now—an' turns him loose, expectin' the gent'll come back for him when he finds he's strayed. But he don't an' there's Julius."

"How long was this prospector here?"

"About a month off an' on. He was scoutin' 'round them hills north o' here."

"When was he here?"

"Well, he pulled his freight maybe three-four days before I seen you last."

"I thought you said when I asked yuh that time yuh hadn't seen any strangers."

"He wasn't a stranger. I'd knowed him a month. Lander, Tom Lander, that was his name, an' he'd play pedro all night."

"Yeah," said Johnny and went to his saddle where it lay on its side near the edge of the porch and proceeded to untie the strings that bound his slicker. "D'he happen to be here the night o' the twenty-third o' June?"

Mr. Cooley scratched his head and pondered.

"I think maybe he was," said he. "I'll ask Mary. She'll know."

He bawled his question and Mrs. Cooley came to the door.

"The twenty-third o' June?" she repeated. "Seems to me now that was the day you broke the churn, Cooley, gittin' mad at it for stickin'—shore, yuh needn't mumble an' deny it. You remember all right. Shore, the twenty-third. He wasn't here during

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the day, Mister Lander wasn't, but he stayed all night."

"Then he was here the mornin' o' the twenty-fourth," said Johnny, getting up from his knees.

"O' course," Mrs. Cooley told him impatiently.

Johnny laid across Mr. Cooley's spread knees the article he had taken from the folds of his slicker. It was a split-ear bridle, hand-carved, with silver rein-chains, and silver buckle and conchas. Altogether a superior bridle, and one not easily forgotten. Mr. Cooley blinked.

"That's Tom Lander's bridle," he said slowly, and raised inquiring eyes to Johnny's face.

"I took that off a dead gray hoss about five mile south o' here. The brand on that hoss was H-L, same as the brand on that burro. Cooley, I don't guess Tom Lander'll ever come back for Julius."

JOHNNY RAMSAY did not ride to Farewell. Instead he returned to Paradise Bend. With him rode Mr. Cooley, a very quiet Mr. Cooley, who chewed a great deal of tobacco and led Julius at the end of a rope. Julius was packed. Under the diamond hitch was stuck a miner's long-handled shovel and pick. On the way they stopped at Rocket.

That their entry into the Bend might be unobserved they rode in at night. Julius was turned into Soapy Ragsdale's corral. Julius' pack and mining tools were stowed away and out of sight under Soapy's counter.

In the back room of Soapy's store Johnny spoke at some length to Laguerre, Harmer, Soapy, Jim Mace, Racey Dawson and the quiet Mr. Cooley, who ceased not to work his jaws squirrel-wise. When Johnny finished talking there was a silence while men looked at each other.

"I'm ——," said Soapy Ragsdale after a space. "I'm *shore* ——."

"Bill Stahl's here now," murmured Jim Mace, drumming with his fingers on the table-top.

"I saw him," Johnny nodded.

"Djuh know," drawled Racey Dawson, "I never did believe Hen Riley doubled back."

"It didn't sound natural," admitted Soapy Ragsdale.

Harmer said nothing. He sat as still as still, his eyes fixed on nothing, his features set like flint.

"How long's Bill Stahl been here?" inquired Johnny.

"Three days," Jim Mace told him. "He's goin' back tomorrow."

"Will he?" said Johnny softly. "I wonder."

"Scotty Mackenzie'll want to be in on this," put in Soapy Ragsdale. "I'm gonna go out to the Flyin'-M."

Soapy Ragsdale departed. So did Johnny. But he did not go to the corral. He went down the street to the Broken Dollar and had a lonely one finger at the bar. Across the room, beside the high stool of one of the case-keepers, stood Harry Slay.

And that was the man Dorothy Burr intended to marry. For that low-flung, bandit, tinhorn, and in all probability murderer as well, she had turned down Johnny Ramsay. Johnny had strong hopes that circumstances arising in the next few days would effectually prevent the marriage. Yet he was no happier, for he himself would not be benefited thereby. Dorothy had refused him, and the world was a dark place to live in, and his life was completely spoiled.

Johnny, sulkily regarding his successful rival, was caught staring and had to nod. To give him an excuse for turning his back, Johnny bought a cigar he didn't want, stuck it unlighted between his teeth and side-wheeled slowly out.

CHAPTER XXIV

A FAIR AND SUMMER MORNING

MANY horses were being saddled at the various corrals in the morning. The men that cinched on the heavy hulls were a serious-faced outfit of citizens. None of them smiled. They rarely spoke one to another.

"I'm takin' one bunch south to Harper's," Johnny said to Scotty Mackenzie, "an' Laguerre's goin' west. Whadda yuh think o' Crow Creek way for you an' yore boys?"

Scotty was looking down Main Street toward the Rocket trail. His blue eyes turned frosty as he looked. He did not reply for a moment. Then he said:

"I guess none of us'll have to go. Here they come now."

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Johnny swung 'round.

"Don't look quite like we expected, do they?" said he.

"De black-tail dun," remarked Laguerre, edging up to Johnny.

Up Main Street five men were riding. The leader was Chance Blaisdell. The others were Jack Murgatroyd and three strangers. One of the strangers was riding a black-tail dun.

Four saddled led horses accompanied the riders. Across each empty saddle a corpse was lashed pack-fashion—a dead and gruesome body with dangling arms and legs that flopped and jerked indecently.

The five rode up, and stopped.

"Howdy, gents," said Chance Blaisdell, his alert animal-like eyes sweeping the crowd.

"Whatcha got?" asked Soapy Ragsdale.

"We got the fellers that helped hold up the train," declared Chance, smiling, and swinging to the ground. "Caught 'em over on Crow Creek an' rubbed out four of 'em. Where's Bill Stahl?"

"Be here in a minute," said Johnny. "Howdja know they're the hold-ups?"

"Trailed 'em. Skinny squealed before he died."

"Got the cash?"

"Naw, they must 'a' cached it some'ers."

"We'll find that later," contributed the stranger on the dun.

He was a clean-shaven young man with a hard face and a slight stoop.

"But I know Skinny an' Spill Harper was in Piegan City when the train was held up," said Johnny. "They was in the posse with us, Jack, an' you know it."

"Shore I know it," said the dark-faced deputy. They didn't actually hold up the train. They just fixed it so it would be held up—telegrams an' things," he added vaguely.

"Oh, yeah, I see," Johnny said, looking at the dead bodies.

Chance, relating swiftly the manner in which the four had met their deaths, helped his friends unpack the bodies and prop them sitting against the stockade of the corral. It was noticeable that Chance did all the talking.

"A good job," observed Chance, and rested his knuckles on his hips and spread his legs.

The crowd muttered and swayed closer to the stockade. Those four dead men were well-known citizens—the Harper boys, Skinny Devinney and Tom Keen.

"I wish we could 'a' got the other six," said Chance, "but she's like I says, gents, them hosses was too handy, an' ours was beat out. We got two-thirds o' the gang, anyway, an'——"

Johnny had heard enough. He pushed free of the crowd, twitching Racey's sleeve as he passed him.

"Get 'em into the bar an' keep 'em there," said Johnny, when they were behind the kitchen lean-to. "I got an idea. It's a bird. I'm gonna get Julius."

"Wait a shake," begged Racey, greatly mystified by the cryptic sentences.

But Johnny evaded the clutching hands and ran 'round the corner.

"Talkin's dry work," suggested Racey in Chance's ear. "Let's irrigate — all of us."

Which was a large order, but as Racey intended making Johnny foot the bill, what did he care for money?"

Chance and his friends in the van of the crowd jostled into the hotel and lined the bar four deep. Bottle-neck clinked on tumbler-rim and there was merriment and joy.

"Meet my friend, Mister Crail," said Chance Blaisdell, indicating the hard-faced young man who had ridden the black-tail dun.

Racey shook hands with this person and they drank together.

"Dunno what we'd have done without Sam Crail," Chance averred loudly. "It was him done most o' the trailin'."

"It wasn't no trouble," deprecated Mr. Crail, and filled his glass.

Ten minutes later the hotel proprietor, carefully primed by Johnny Ramsay, entered the barroom.

"Hey Chance!" he called. "How long yuh gonna leave them four remainders in the hot sun? They're too near the kitchen, an' the cook don't like it. You'll have to move 'em."

"Fair enough," said Chance, and he and his four companions went out to the corral. Near the row of bodies, tied to the bars of the gate, a melancholy gray burro stood and fanned his ears and tail at the flies. The burro was packed as if in readiness for the trail. Under the diamond hitch was thrust a pick and a long-handled shovel. Across the top of the pack lay a bridle—a

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beautifully hand-carved split-ear with silver buckle and conchas.

At sight of the burro Chance's eyelids twitched and he stumbled. Then he walked on and laid hold of dead Bale Harper's shoulders.

"Take his feet, Jack," said Chance.

Jack stooped. Mr. Crail and the other two strangers bent over the body of Keen.

"Just stay right there," said Johnny Ramsay. *"An' don't move yore hands."*

There was something in Johnny's tone that told them he was not joking. The five turned their astonished heads and stared into the muzzles of a large and varied assortment of firearms. At least four deadly weapons were trained on Chance Blaisdell. None of the five men budged.

"What in —— yuh tryin' to do!" cried Chance after an amazed moment.

"I'm doin' it," said Johnny, removing Chance's gun, while Laguerre and a few friends similarly served Chance's comrades.

"I'd shore like to know——" began Mr. Crail.

"So'd we lak to know," Laguerre said brutally. "Let dat dead man down easy —so. You come wit' me."

Chance, Crail, Jack Murgatroyd and the other two men did not cease to complain bitterly as they were all herded into the Jacks Up Saloon and crowded into a corner under guard.

"By Gawd!" exclaimed Chance, in a rage. "Whadda you fellers tryin' to do?"

"We just want to talk to yuh a li'l bit," said Johnny mildly, "an' ask yuh a few questions. If yuh answer 'em all free an' plenteous yuh go on yore way rejoicin'."

"When I do," averred Chance, "you won't go on yore way rejoicin'."

"Maybe," nodded Johnny. "We oughta appoint a jury an' a judge."

"I'll be judge," said Dan Smith, the marshal.

But Soapy Ragsdale was the people's choice for that office. Dan Smith did not even get on the jury. Much disgusted, he remained to grumble at the proceedings.

"THE court bein' made up, we'll begin," Johnny said, and dangled in front of Chance's eyes the bridle with the silver conchas. "Chance," he continued, "djever see this split-ear before?"

Chance hesitated. Then he said:

"Shore. I seen it. It was the bridle on the hoss of the old road-agent I had to kill down there at Rocket. You seen me down him when he was tryin' to break away. I s'pose you took the bridle offen his dead hoss over south o' Cooley's. Shore; it's his bridle."

As Chance spoke Harmer's finger-nails dug deep into the palms of his hands

"Djever see that burro before?" pursued Johnny.

"What burro?"

"That gray burro with the pack, tied to the corral bars."

"Never seen it before in my life."

"Shore o' that?"

"Shore."

"Yet that burro is branded L-H on the left hip, same as that dead gray hoss south o' Cooley's was branded. An' you say you never seen the burro?"

"No, I tell you!"

"Then what made yuh wiggle yore eyes an' stub yore foot when yuh seen him, huh? Dunno? All right, we'll let it go at that. Here's somethin' else. Djuh remember, Chance, how the old gent yuh downed that time in Rocket, how he come runnin' for Telescope an' me shoutin', 'I can tell—' an' that's as far as he got, 'cause you downed him. I wonder what it was he could tell, Chance?"

"I dunno," said Chance defiantly.

Crail was scratching his head nonchalantly. The other three looked uncomfortable.

"Yuh'll swear yuh found a busted Wells-Fargo package with some money in her an' one o' Old Man Fane's buckskin bags on this man you downed in Rocket."

"O' course I do."

Johnny called Mr. Cooley. That gentleman testified before the pop-eyed crowd that the man killed in Rocket, as described by Johnny Ramsay, was, to the best of his knowledge, none other than Tom Lander, a prospector who had stayed off and on at his ranch, for a month. The bridle Johnny had in his hand was the bridle of Lander's gray horse. He had seen it often, had Mr. Cooley. On the afternoon of the date of the Fane hold-up Lander had been playing pedro with Mr. Cooley at the ranch-house. The night of the Cutter robbery Tom Lander had slept the night through at Cooley's.

"What's Tom Lander gotta do with me?" snarled Chance.

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Johnny took from his pocket a penknife.

"When I was ridin' in from Cooley's me 'n Cooley stopped at Rocket," he said. "Naturally I asked Dave Sinclair a few questions. It come out that it was Dave an' the marshal who buried the man you killed, Chance. They searched him first, an' all they found was this penknife. Dave, he kep' it. This is it. Mr. Harmer, have you ever seen this knife before?"

Mr. Harmer looked dully at the knife.

"It's my knife," he said quietly. "I lent her to Tom Lander just before he rode away north."

"I seen it too," piped up Mr. Cooley. "I often seen Tom Lander pick his teeth with that knife."

"I guess that's enough," Johnny said. "I knowed they was somethin' off when you downed that feller, Chance. It was so —— unnecessary. He couldn't 'a' got away. But I never really was satisfied till I talked to Cooley. Listen here, Chance. Wasn't you an' three other men sittin' near them mountain ash trees south o' Cooley's dividin' the proceeds o' the Cutter deal, when along come Tom Lander an' surprised yuh? We knowed by they bein' no tracks behind the dead gray that he was walkin' when he was downed.

"After takin' Lander prisoner yuh went to Cooley's for a pony for him. Cooley asked yuh to bring him past the ranch so's his wife could see a real live road-agent, but yuh took good care not to go near no houses till yuh reached Rocket. There yuh let him try to escape so's yuh'd have an excuse to down him right in plain sight of a lot o' folks an' get a name for doin' yore duty. Ain't that the how of it, Chance?"

"I was sleepin' in Cutter the night o' the hold-up, an' I can prove it!" roared Chance.

"I know that," said Johnny. "I don't believe y'ever were in many o' these robberies. Yuh sort o' laid back an' let some other fellah do the work. Yuh done things like fake trailin' an' tollin' the sheriff off on a wild trail whenever somethin' was goin' to happen an' yuh didn't want him 'round. Yuh played foxy, Chance, but that ain't sayin' yuh wasn't near them mountain ashes south o' Cooley's when Lander was downed. Why didja let the burro get away, Chance? Yuh'd oughta downed him an' buried his pack. Instead o' that yuh let him get away. An' why didn'tcha bury the saddle an' bridle o' that gray hoss? Was yuh in a hurry, or what?"

"Yuh can't prove nothin' on me—on us!" grated Chance, his eyes glaring.

"I'm gonna try," averred Johnny. "I'm gonna work this thing out from the beginnin'. I want you to be satisfied, Chance."

"You go to ——!" blared the baited deputy.

Jack Murgatroyd looked his contempt of the fuming Blaisdell. Crail yawned. Their two comrades shifted from one foot to another and swapped tobacco for matches.

"Crail," said Johnny, "is that mare you rode in on yores?"

"Think I rustled her?" Crail sneered.

"I dunno. I'm askin'."

"You can take it that she's mine."

"Owned her long?"

"Wouldn't yuh like her birth certificate an' where she was born, an' the name of her pa and ma?"

"It would shore help," was Johnny's grave reply. "But seein's yuh ain't likely to have all that information in yore breast-pocket a answer to what I asked yuh will have to do. Have yuh owned that mare long?"

"Three years."

"Where djuh get her?"

"Fort Worth. That cayuse is all the way from Texas, an' I wish she was back there with me on her back. By Gawd, I never seen such a suspicious lot o' badgers as you gents, an' I've traveled a lot. Gimme the makin's, Chance."

"Gents," said Johnny, turning to the jury, "one o' the three men that shot Old Man Fane an' Bill Homan rode a black-tail dun. Telescope an' me found where these three tied their hosses. By the hoof-marks, by black hairs caught on the brush, by threads o' rope into the bark of a tree, we made out that the black-tail was a nervous hoss, an' pulled back when tied. Some time ago a black-tail dun mare was sold by the Black Bear, a Piegan on the Fort Yardley reservation, to that red-headed jigger Barry Camp.

"This mare was a whizzer, kicked, bit, pulled—the whole layout. Bucked, o' course. Four hosses had been tied to the trees south o' Cooley's where Tom Lander went out. They was li'l threads o' manila ground in the bark o' one o' them trees. Yuh remember what I told yuh this mornin' about Mose Peters an' his black-tail dun

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mare at Diamond. Gents, that mare there was a biter, a kicker, an' a puller. One o' the eleven hosses belongin' to the hold-ups had a black tail an' was a puller, too. Gents, take a look out the window at the hitchin'-rail in front o' the hotel."

INSTANTLY the doorway and windows were crowded with eager heads. Tied by the neck, not to the hitching-rail proper, but to the much stronger anchorage of the middle post, a dun mare alternately swayed back on her rope and snapped her teeth at the empty air. This exercise she varied by lashing out with both hindlegs at any dog approaching within five yards of her. Decidedly, that dun mare was not a children's pet.

As the steel is drawn to the magnet, public attention was drawn to the hard-faced gentleman known as Crail. Public opinion voiced itself strongly. The younger set clamored for the rope.

"Gents, this has gotta be legal!" bawled Soapy Ragsdale, and the solid citizens backed him up, arguing that it was precisely these hasty, unthinking lynchings that gave the West a bad name and retarded immigration. Which was good logic, and made the hotheads pause.

"Y' ain't proved nothin'!" cried Chance, taking advantage of the lull.

"Chance," said Johnny, "you an' yore friends are shorely foxy. Gotta give yuh credit. Which one o' yuh was it that thought o' lettin' Hen Riley slide out o' the Rocket calaboose on Bill Stahl's hoss so that Bill would chase him from —— to breakfast an' get Jake Rule to help him, thereby allowin' the road-agents to make a heap o' trail north while the sheriffs was all busy some'ers else? That was one slick trick, that was. An' Murgatroyd gettin' Bill Stahl to let him go to Piegan to look up evidence again' the road-agents!

"Jack, I never suspected you till that night at Marysville when yuh come bulgin' into the judge's house an' seen me there. It was one hot night, remember, an' the shades was all down, makin' it hotter. An' you just sat there an' sweated an' never asked why was the shades pulled. Also I never heard yuh talk so much in my life. Which wasn't natural, Jack."

"Say, gents," broke in Crail, "I ask you what has this —— fool proved? Hosses that pull back an' shades pulled down! Aw ——, if yuh can stretch a man on stuff like this, a gent won't dast to look sideways no more without being suspected o' murder!"

"I'm doin' my best," said Johnny, "an' I ain't all through neither. Listen, she was a 40-65 killed Bill Homan, a 40-65 was used in the fight at Farewell when Holloway was downed an' Slim Berdan nicked. They was a 40-65 at Harper's ranch. Crail, they's a 40-65 under yore right fender. Where djuh buy the cartridges for that rifle? I asked more'n one place but nobody kept 'em in. Now, now, don't tell me if you don't wanna. It don't make no difference. I was just wonderin,' thassall. If Mr. Mace would kindly get that rifle."

Mr. Mace kindly would and did. Johnny took the rifle and held it level across his middle.

"Now—" began Johnny.

"Hell's bells," interrupted Crail, "they's lots o' 40-65's. Anybody could easy own one."

"Are yuh shore Skinny Devinney didn't own this rifle?" said Johnny. "Are yuh shore yuh didn't change guns with him after yuh killed him, 'count o' bustin' yore own or somethin'?"

Johnny looked hopefully at Crail, but Crail was not to be caught by leading questions. He was too clever a bird for that.

"She's my own Winchester," he declared with an oath. "Ask my friends here," he urged.

The four of them eagerly swore to the ownership. The two strangers went further. They said they had seen Crail buy the rifle down in the Panhandle.

"You've had this rifle with yuh right along, then?" said Johnny.

"Shore," Crail told him.

"All right. Gents, you hear what he says. Now you listen hard. Telescope an' I was at the Harper ranch one day. They was a 40-65 there. I shot against Skinny an' Spill with it, an' I managed to nick the loadin'-gate with my knife without them seein' me so it scratched the cartridge in two places when yuh put it in. I got the idea from my own loadin'-gate bein' scratched when I first came here an' you-all tried me for the murder o' Fane an' Homan. I throwed one o' the empties under the bulge o' the foundation log o' the ranch-house, another I kicked under a bench by the door. Mister Harmer, will

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yuh take them two spent shells out o' yore pocket an' tell the boys where yuh got 'em."

Mr. Harmer did this. When his testimony was concluded the empties were stood on end on a chair seat, and Johnny took from his pocket seven other spent shells and aligned them with the first two.

"Gents," said he, "Mister Harmer seen me pick up these seven shells near the express-car after the robbery in the cut west o' Diamond. They's a few cartridges in this magazine—by the heft. I'll just work 'em out."

Rapidly he pumped the lever. Four cartridges whirled over his shoulder and clattered on the floor. He picked them up and placed them in a row behind the nine empties. Crail's eyelids twitched. He was beginning to perceive the true inwardness of Johnny's leading questions.

"I'd like the jury to look at the scratches on them thirteen pieces o' brass," said Johnny Ramsay.

The gentlemen of the jury looked. They and Soapy Ragsdale examined with great care the spent shells and the live cartridges. Judge and jury went back to their places.

"No use a-talkin', boys," said Soapy, addressing the prisoners. "That 40-65 Winchester Johnny's holdin' was used in the Diamond hold-up. Do yuh still swear she's Crail's Winchester?"

The five men made no reply.

"They was five men actually in that hold-up," continued Soapy. "We know by what Johnny told us last night that Camp, Devinney, Tom Keen, an' the Harper boys was only accessories. We know Chance an' Jack Murgatroyd was busy some'ers else. That leaves a couple besides you, Crail, an' them two gents at the end. Who an' where is the missin' pair? Won't tell, huh? All right. Where's Barry Camp? Dumb again, huh? Where's the money, then?"

"Yo're so —— smart—you've found out so much," grunted Chance, "s'pose now you just find that money."

"Maybe we will, but you won't be alive when we do. Chance, you an' them other four gents are about the lowest set o' things that crawl. I'd call yuh snakes, only I'd have to apologize every time I meet a reptyle. You an' them four dead men outside was pardners. You downed 'em so's yuh could have their share an' somebody to lay the blame on. You was bright-witted enough to know that folks wasn't none likely to bust their necks askin' where, how, an' whyfor when yuh told yore li'l tale about these dead men being accessories before an' after, so I guess yuh was bright-witted enough to make it a full hand by rubbin' out Camp an' the missin' pair. We hope so.

"We only wish yuh'd brought 'em into camp along with the rest. Was Camp an' any o' you fellers, Crail for instance, in the Farewell racket when Holloway was downed an' Slim Berdan nicked? Was yuh, huh? They was a 40-65 in that riot, yuh know. Can't say, huh? All right, let it go at that. I guess some o' yuh was there all right, but after all, it don't really signify—now. Look here, how about Bill Stahl? Was he in cahoots with you fellers? We lynched him on suspicion this mornin' early."

"——!" cried Jack Murgatroyd, "whadja hang him for? He didn't know nothin' about nothin'. We used to laugh. Foolin' him was like foolin' a baby. He was just a plain —— idjit, that feller. All the same, yuh shouldn't 'a' lynched him."

"We didn't," said the amazing Mr. Ragsdale. "We kind o' thought he was just a mark like you say, so we locked him up in the calaboose till we could find out for shore. We've caught yuh in a heap o' lies, but we'll take it yo're tellin' the truth, seein' as they ain't a hoofmark to mix Bill into this. Carey, you got the key. Might's well let Bill out. Chance, an' you other boys, here's an idea! We want to know where that money is, an' who the other gents are in this hold-up business. I guess the boys 'll be willin' to let one o' yuh go free if he'll tell us what we want to know. I'll get a pack o' cards, an' yuh can cut for high card to win. Hey, barkeep, where's a pack o' cards?"

"Nemmine about no cards!" exclaimed Crail. "We'll stand pat, I guess."

Four sullen, defiant faces corroborated Crail's pronouncement.

"You know best," Soapy said gently, and, with a nice regard for the feelings of the condemned, leaned his head close to Jim Mace's ear while he whispered behind his hand, "Jim, will you slide out an' collect five ropes? The newest an' stiffest, Jim. We'll be along in a minute."

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CHAPTER XXV

GREEN AND GOLD

"I DIDN'T see Slay at the trial this mornin'," said Racey Dawson to Johnny, as they sat on the reach of a boxless freight-wagon in the cool of the evening.

"I seen him. He wasn't right up under the pulpit, but he was there. At the lynchin' too, he kind o' stayed back where it was cool."

"He oughta be down in them cottonwoods with the other five," declared Racey.

"They ain't a thing against him. Nobody snitched on him like I expected. What can yuh prove?"

"Nothin'," admitted Racey. "—— the luck! Chance was gonna squeal when he was sittin' there on the hoss under the limb with the rope 'round his neck. An' you had to let Jack Murgatroyd start the hoss!"

"I've told yuh forty times I was excited. Yuh make me sick! What difference does one man make?"

"It makes a lot o' difference," grumbled Racey. "You was the one suspected him in the first place, an' when they's a good chance to get him you gotta spoil it. Y'oughta been more careful. Hell's bells, they's two thousand apiece on them gents! You must think money grows out o' the ground like grass."

"There yuh go again, talkin' about money! Ain't yuh never satisfied? Lookit all the money I earned for you an' Telescope. You don't hear me bawlin' my head off 'cause I gotta divide with you two, do yuh?"

"Huh? Say, look—the money you earned for Telescope an' me! Which I shore admire yore nerve! The money you earned! I guess now Telescope didn't do no ridin' 'round an' trailin' from —— to breakfast an' all huh? No, I guess he didn't. An' me, I didn't wrastle a lot o' mules an' hosses that tried to bite me in the pants an' pat my face with their hind feet every chance they got, did I, just so's I could find out things for yuh.

"Oh, no, I didn't. Not a-tall. An' you got the gall to say the money you earned for us. You wait till I tell Telescope. You wait. You two gimme the Dutch rub one time for not talkin' half so loud. You see what happens to you. You see. The money you earned—well, by Gawd, Johnny, the dictionary ain't got the words to describe what I think o' yuh."

"An' that's lucky for you, yuh flathead," Johnny declared tranquilly, "'cause you might say somethin' I didn't like, an' then what them jacks done to you won't be a marker on what I'd do to yuh."

"Oh, is that so?" cried the provoked Racey. "Now—ow—wow! That's a new shirt!"

"I'm a-goin' away," Johnny told him, hurriedly withdrawing into the darkness. "'Cause if I stayed first thing yuh know you'n' me'd be quarrelin'. Whatcha squallin' about? That cigaret was almost out when I dropped it down your neck."

Johnny dodged a hurled rock and fled.

He had fooled with Racey, but he did not feel in a fooling mood. Life since his last conversation with Dorothy was a serious affair. Soberly he went up to his room in the hotel, lit the lamp, turned it low and sat down on the cot. For the twentieth time he took from his pocket the small, square package with the obliterated address, that he had picked up at the scene of the Diamond hold-up. For the fifteenth time he opened the package and dribbled into his open palm some of the coarse dust therein.

In order to see better he turned up the lamp, and his elbow, brushing the top of the table, knocked to the floor the heavy outer wrapping of the package. Stooping, and retrieving the brown manila paper, he held it for a chance instant between him and the light.

His eyes widened. The chance instant became a long two minutes during which he continued to hold the paper between him and the lamp.

"O' course, I knowed it," he told himself as he put the paper down, "but I wasn't sure, an' anyway what good does it do? If I only knowed where you come from," he added wistfully, eying the dust in the hollow of his palm.

Idly and absent-mindedly he began to pour from one hand to the other that tiny heap of coarse dust. In the bright flame of the lamp the gold shone dully. Here and there in it minute particles were tinged a lambent green. Johnny had not previously remarked this greenish shade.

Quickly he poured back the dust into the package, wrapped it, tied it, and put it in his pocket.

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"She's a chance," he said, "but maybe he can tell. Funny I never thought o' that before."

He blew out the lamp, and clattered down the stairs to the barroom and the street.

An hour later Johnny issued from the doorway of a house not far from Soapy Ragsdale's store. In front of the store he paused, built himself a cigaret, and looked down the street where glowed the lighted windows of the Broken Dollar.

"No sense in waitin'," he said to himself, and stole briskly down the street.

Mrs. Wallace was not in her accustomed place behind the roulette-table when Johnny looked through the nearest of the open windows. One of the faro dealers was spinning the wheel; and Slay, cold, immobile, a dead cigar upthrust beneath his pointed nose, was watching the plays.

Johnny went down to the end of Main Street where his view of the Slay residence on the river bank was not blocked by the houses of the town. There was a light behind the drawn shades of the sitting-room. Johnny walked across the street and turned into the path that led to the house.

He stepped up on the porch and knocked on the door. Almost instantly it opened, and Mrs. Wallace stood there. She was in evening dress. Her smooth shoulders gleamed satiny in the light of the lamp on the table behind her. She smiled her quick bright smile when she saw the visitor was Johnny.

"Come in," she said, and when he had entered closed the door and indicated an armchair near the window.

"Take that chair," said she. "It's the same comforable one you sat in before."

Johnny sat, and found himself back to the door and facing the light. The lady sat down sidewise on the couch. Table and lamp were at her left.

"You've been very remiss," chided Mrs. Wallace. "You promised to come to see me the first time you were in town, and this is the second time you've been in."

"I did come here the first time I was in town, but you was out some'ers. I couldn't wait. I had business. But I'm here now an' you can tell me what kind o' trouble yo're in an' what yuh want me to do—that is, if yuh still want me to help yuh?"

"Why, of course I do—bless that lamp! It shines right in my eyes."

SHE rose swiftly, moved the lamp from the center of the table to the end opposite Johnny, and went to one of the windows and raised the lowered shade halfway to the top.

"Pretty hot," said she. "We'll raise the shade a trifle even if it does let in the insects. I wish I dared to raise them all."

She sat down again with a pleasant rustle of silk and clasped her hands 'round one of her knees. Her profile was as much in the light as ever.

"Before yuh tell me anythin'," said Johnny, "I wanna tell you somethin'. They's five men hangin' down in them cottonwoods."

He paused, and her face went pale a shade.

"Yes," she murmured. "I—I saw them."

"What yuh didn't see was how Chance Blaisdell was gonna snitch an' Jack Murgatroyd kicked the hoss Chance was on, an' the hoss started an' swung Chance off. I had hold o' Jack at the time, an' I could 'a' stopped him, but I let him go just long enough for him to kick the hoss."

"Why did you?"

"Why djuh s'pose? Who was Chance gonna snitch on?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

"Yes yuh do too. He was gonna squeal on yore brother, an' you know it."

"My brother! Why——"

"Whatsa use playin' innocent? I've been shore from the day Harry Slay brought me in to the Bend an' tried to have me hung that he was the head o' this road-agent outfit. Findin' Bill Homan's watch near the wagon slue quicksand made it a cinch the gang's headquarters was here in the Bend. Yeah, Bill Homan's watch, I said. Harry sort o' overthrowed for once—or was it you? Makes you wink, don't it? Now listen here. I lost one good opportunity to dump Harry by lettin' Jack start Chance's hoss 'cause I wanted you to get clean away before the dam broke. If it hadn't been for you here Blaisdell could 'a' talked his head off an' welcome. I gave you a chance at Piegan City. You could 'a' drifted yoreself then, an' you could 'a' taken yore brother with yuh. But yuh couldn't see it that way. Yuh had to come back—with him.

"I'm givin' yuh one more chance. Go now. If yuh don't yo're a heap liable to be squeezed between the cow an' the corral when Harry gets dumped. He's gonna get dumped. Don't think he ain't. I'll see

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to that. Remember what I told yuh about them Injun rustlers an' the one hoss too many? This paymaster hold-up is that one hoss. Now you do what I tell yuh—hit the trail an' hit it quick. I expect yuh'll tell Harry what I said.

"Maybe it'll save a lot o' trouble all 'round if yuh do. Maybe he'll decide to go with yuh, or maybe he'll want the other way. Shootin' it out always does make a deal simpler. Suit yoreself. Anyway you've got the warnin'. Honest, I don't wanna see anythin' happen to you. Can'tcha see I don't when tellin' you means yore brother 'll have his chance, too?"

"You've talked a lot, but you've said hardly anything. You suspect—what does suspicion amount to? You can prove absolutely nothing."

The words were sufficiently brave and her eyes were steady as she vainly endeavored to stare him down. But her face was colorless. The little pulse in her throat was throbbing frantically.

"I was hopin' yuh'd take my word for it an' git," he told her. "Yuh want proof. Before I was figurin' on some jigger snitchin' for that proof, but now I got it my own self. Here she is."

From the pocket of his chaps he produced a small square package wrapped in thick brown manila paper. The eyes of Mrs. Wallace dilated. She uttered a faint gasp. Johnny held up the package.

"I picked this up under the express-car in the cut near Diamond," said he. "The address was all smooched up with dirt so's yuh couldn't read it. Last night I just happened to hold the outside wrapper against the lamp-light. Yuh could read the address quite plain then. I guess when yuh addressed them eight li'l packages to yoreself care o' the Sailors' National in San Francisco, yuh never expected they'd go out on the same train that carried the paymaster, now didja?"

"My brother will certainly kill you, Mister Ramsay. Never doubt it. That package you hold in your hand is mine and it is one of the eight. How does it or its contents prove anything? I suppose I'm stupid, but——"

"No, you ain't stupid. That's the last thing you ever will be. Yo're clever as forty foxes, but why y'ain't more mad is what I can't see. You'd oughta be hollerin' an' denyin' everythin'."

"That is low—and ineffective. As I said, my brother will kill you. I'd like to, myself. About that proof——"

"Shore. In this package, as yuh know better'n I do, they's gold-dust. They's tiny speckles o' green in this dust. I took this dust about two hours ago to Aronson. You know Aronson. He's one good assayer, an' what he dunno about mines—well. Aronson says that this dust comes from Old Man Fane's mine. Which that mine is the only one within five hundred miles that has traces o' copper in the dust. Do yuh still say this package is yores?"

Mrs. Wallace ran the tip of a pink tongue along the edges of her lips.

"What are you going to do?" she asked with admirable calm.

"Give you time to slope. Take yore brother with yuh if yuh like. Whatever yuh decide'll suit me. They's a stage south tomorrow. I keep my mouth shut about this package for three days. After that——"

He left the sentence unfinished and returned the little square package to his pocket.

"Now yuh know," he told her.

"Now I know," she said. "I know a great deal more than I did. I wonder if you know something, too. I wonder if you know why I asked you to come to see me the first time you came to town."

"I was waitin' for you to tell me."

CHAPTER XXVI

THE CLAWS OF THE LEOPARD

THERE was a row of sofa-cushions ranged along the back of the couch. She slid her hand under the nearest, withdrew it quickly—and in somewhat less than the blink of an eye, a sawed-off, double-barreled eight-gage Greener lay across her knees, the twin muzzles trained on Johnny's abdomen. Furthermore, both hammers were cocked and two white fingers hung on the triggers.

"Now I know why yuh didn't get mad," observed Johnny, looking death in the eye, so to speak. "With four aces like that in yore hand yuh could afford not to. Tell yuh what, if that shotgun's loaded, an' you keep on a-fiddlin' with them triggers they's gonna be one awful mess in this armchair."

He grinned at her, but he was careful not

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to move his hands from where they rested on the arms of the chair.

"You should have had better sense than to come spying on us," said she.

"Yore sawed-off shore says so."

"Why couldn't you mind your own business? Why did you have to come up here?"

"Somebody had to."

"You didn't have to be the somebody."

"Maybe not, but whatcha worryin' about? I won't be somebody after you've *pulled* them triggers."

She contemplated him, her expression a mixture of speculation and regret.

"I wish there were some means of arranging this thing," she said. "I rather like you. You've amused me—in a way."

"In a way."

Johnny laughed quite heartily. And he had thought she was in love with him. Had he been a Frenchman he would have shrugged his shoulders.

"But of course," she went on, "we have to make sure."

"They's only one way to make shore."

"I know. I'm sorry. It was very decent of you to warn me and give me my chance. I do appreciate it. Unfortunately I can not show my appreciation."

By her manner she might have been declining a cup of tea.

"You shore can make the old dictonary sit up, play dead, an' roll over," he remarked admiringly. "But ain't that Wells-Fargo cannon yo're a-dandlin' across yore knees kind o' heavy? Why don't yuh use a Derringer?"

What a foolish question to ask with death a breath away. He wondered what death would be like. Once, long ago, he had seen an Indian killed by a shotgun fired at close range. The charge had blown out half the redskin's ribs. Somehow it seemed to Johnny that he was not actually a participant in the grim situation staged by Mrs. Wallace.

This person in the armchair simply could not be Johnny Ramsay. The scene was too unreal. It was like a dream, a peculiarly disagreeable nightmare. He would wake up in a moment and find himself crosswise on his bed, fighting the pillow, with Laguerre desiring profanely to know why he couldn't let other folks sleep.

He repeated his question regarding the Derringer.

"Better not talk," she advised.

At which Johnny was provoked to irritation.

"You've shore got a nerve!" he cried. "Can'tcha let a man talk? Why don'tcha pull the trigger? Whatcha waitin' for?"

"I'm waiting for Harry. When he comes home he'll—do what's necessary. I'm just keeping you here till he comes. He should be here almost any time."

"Oh, he should, huh? I was wonderin' why yuh moved the lamp an' raised the shade. If Harry walks down to the end of Main Street he can see the signal plain as yuh please. That's shore one nice trick to work on a orphan child like me."

She made no reply.

"You'll both be lynched," declared Johnny.

"Oh, no, that's all fixed. Harry'll simply say he came home and found me struggling in your arms, and I'll swear to it."

" 'Strugglin' in yore arms' sounds like a book. I read that some'ers. Maybe they won't believe yuh."

"Yes, they will. I'll tear my dress and scratch my arms so everything will look natural. We'll be believed. Don't worry."

"I ain't—much. It don't seem necessary somehow. Yuh think of everythin', don'tcha? Wiser'n forty owls, y' betcha. An' I let you come honeyfugglin' 'round me an' pile on the sawder a foot thick! But yuh didn't find out much till I chose to let yuh, did yuh?"

"I didn't find out a thing till I caught you in Damson watching Harper and—and the others, when you should have been hunting the Flying-M strays. Then I knew what you had come to the Bend for. But Harry suspected you from the very first. He'd have finished you before this, but I couldn't let him till I was sure."

No saleswoman selling notions could have been more painfully matter-of-fact than Mrs. Wallace as she talked so fluently of eliminating a human being. The pungent humor of it suddenly stared Johnny full force. He laughed till the tears came.

"Scotty was right," he said, when he could speak. "He told me yuh was prettier'n a li'l red wagon, but always yuh reminded him of a leopard. I never understood what he meant. It's shore a stand-off who gets the credit though—you or the leopard."

She began to tap the floor with an impatient toe.

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"What's the hurry?" he jibed. "Don't grudge the last few minutes, do yuh? Well, I seen yore foot click-clackin' away an' I thought yuh was gettin' nervous. Say, look here, Mrs. Wallace, djuh remember one evening goin' out back o' the Broken Dollar, climbin' into a empty freight-wagon, an' cryin'? 'My Gawd, what a life!' was what yuh said a couple o' times. I was right close an' heard yuh. Now yuh wouldn't 'a' bawled an' said that if yuh enjoyed stayin' with Harry Slay. Whatsa use o' stickin' by him. He don't treat yuh right. Some day he'll hit yuh again like he did out near the sidetracks in Piegan City.

"Yo're a-figurin' on quittin' some day. I heard yuh say yuh would. Besides, if yuh wasn't figurin' thataway whadja take the trouble o' packin' yore share o' the stuff that's stole clear to Piegan? You done it so's he wouldn't be likely to find out where yuh sent it. He'd 'a' stopped yuh if he could. You know it. Yo're aimin' to have a nice li'l stake all ready waitin' in the Sailors' National when you get ready to pull yore freight. An' you don't wanna divide it with any one either. Shore. Ain't I right?"

"If it does you any good—you are."

"Well, then, why wait? You slide out now, an' I'll help yuh get away. Remember them Injun rustlers an' the last hoss. The cards'll turn that way for you. They always do if yuh play long enough. They gotta. Now——"

"Please stop talking. It's useless. I advise you to think of something else."

Her voice was cold. Her face was as hard and expressionless as that of a graven image. Johnny watched her intently, his muscles tense to take advantage of the slightest waver in her eyes, in the least deflection of the Greener's barrels. There was no waver and no deflection.

Johnny's ears were alert to catch the first sound of a step on the path, on the porch, or the squeak of an opening door. Perhaps Slay would elect to shoot him through the window. In that case. . . .

Johnny's eyebrows drew together in a scowl. His sardonic gray eyes turned sullen. What a failure he had made of the affair. True, he had ferreted out odd ends of evidence in one place and another, but they did not piece together into a harmonious whole. There were bits that he had hoped to work out, and now he would never work them out. His own impending demise troubled him less than the thought that the gambler, his saddlebags and cantinas stuffed with other men's money, would go on his way rejoicing—and marry Dorothy Burr. The hair along the back of his neck began to rise.

"Don't try to hitch your chair 'round!" The words of caution came sharp and clear.

The fingers poised on the triggers stiffened.

"Me!" exclaimed Johnny. "Me hitch my chair 'round! Yo're crazy. My leg's asleep, that's all."

"Don't try to wake it up."

ENSUED a period of silence while a man might draw ten slow full-lunged breaths. Then, without a preliminary sound from the porch, the door gave a gentle creak. The face of Mrs. Wallace altered subtly. For the merest fraction of a second her eyes flickered toward the doorway. Johnny needed no more encouragement. He hurled himself out of the chair, dodged sidewise, and struck up the barrels of the shotgun.

BANG-G-G! The Greener roared like a cannon in that confined space. With the flash of the gun Johnny was crouched down and forward, his gun was out, and he was shooting at two hazy figures blocking the doorway—two figures whose spitting six-shooters blazed redly through the swirling smoke. There had been a third man, but the shotgun had called him, and now he sprawled face downward on the floor.

When Johnny's gun was empty so was the doorway. Of the two men formerly occupying the space one lay upon the floor, kicking and jerking, a bloody froth bubbling at his lips. The other, gunless, hatless, the breast of his shirt heavy with a crimson sogginess, leaned against the wall and clutched his middle with both hands. Even as Johnny looked the long legs gave at the knees, the body crumpled to the floor, jackknifed as in a cramp, then straightened and lay still. So passed out Barry Camp, well and unfavorably known to Johnny and his friends as the red-head.

In the pressing excitement of the moment Johnny had forgotten Mrs. Wallace. He whirled to face her and saw her, a tumbled heap of silken draperies and soft white flesh, huddled across the couch. His first thought

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was that she had stopped a bullet. Searching eyes and fingers discovered no mark of one. She had simply fainted.

Johnny reloaded his six-shooter, lowered the hammer on an empty chamber, slid the weapon into its holster and crossed to the other side of the room. The citizen who had taken his death-wound so hard, the first to fall of the two with whom Johnny had joined issue, lay twisted and motionless, his head on the doorsill. Johnny looked at the face with its slack-jawed, bloody mouth and glazing eyes. He did not know the man.

His gaze passed over the body of Barry Camp and rested on that of the man who had received the Greener's double charge. Johnny heaved the corpse over on its back and stared into the stiff countenance of Harry Slay. Not a buckshot had missed the gambler. The right side of the throat was torn, shredded and pulped. The right arm, ripped off at the shoulder, lay three yards away, the fingers clenched on the butt of a discharged Derringer. There was a welter of blood about. It was seeping into the cracks between the floor-boards.

Johnny went out on the porch, propped himself on a chairback and was frankly sick at his stomach. The paroxysm past, he went in to Mrs. Wallace. She had not yet come to. Johnny sat down to wait.

While he waited he became aware of a faint sound, a sound that brought back with a rush the days of his boyhood—when he had lived in a house with a cellar. But this house had no cellar. There was not a cellar in Sunset County, or Fort Creek either, for that matter. Yet the sound continued, the sound of water leaking down into a cellar. Then, quite suddenly, Johnny understood. It was not water that was dripping so regularly, nor was it a regular cellar.

Mrs. Wallace stirred, moaned, and put a groping hand to her head. Johnny went to her quickly. The dark eyes opened slowly, painfully, and the woman looked up stupidly into Johnny's face. He stepped back. She raised herself on an elbow. She caught sight of what lay beyond the table.

"Dead?" she whispered in a dry voice. "Dead?"

Johnny nodded. He wondered that she should suddenly look so old. Her eyes wide, staring at the silent dead, she dragged herself to a sitting position. She swayed uncertainly to her feet, and tumbled 'round the table. Clinging for support to the edge of the door, she looked down at the body of the red-head lying at her feet. Then slowly she sank to her knees and with an utterly inadequate handkerchief strove to wipe the dust and dirt from the still face.

Johnny stooped beside her and very gently took hold of her arm.

"This—this ain't yore brother," he told her. "He's yonder. You come along with me now till we can fix things up so they're fit to look at. Come along, Mis' Wallace. This ain't yore brother," he repeated, as she made no movement to obey.

She raised a gray face.

"I know he isn't my brother," she said. "He's my husband—my Dave. Oh, Dave! Dave!"

As if the name had been the lever to the floodgate of pent emotion she burst into a storm of wild sobbing.

Her husband! Johnny retreated to the far side of the room and rubbed an amazed forehead. The evening had been sufficiently crammed with surprises, but this rather capped the climax. But Johnny's was a snap and faulty judgment. The climax was not yet.

In the red-head's belt a long bowie lay snug in its sheath. Mrs. Wallace raised a tear-stained face. A lock of hair twisted down across her forehead. She put up a hand and pushed the lock back into place. Her eyes were fixed and staring. Her right hand, groping along the red-head's belt, rested an instant on the hilt of the bowie. Then she jerked out the long knife and jammed the point against her body under the left breast.

Johnny could move swiftly on occasion. And now he moved very swiftly. But he was not swift enough. Her two hands steadying hilt and blade, Mrs. Wallace fell forward on the steel.

When Johnny picked her up and laid her on the sofa she was dead.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE END THEREOF

"TALK about luck!" cried Mr. Soapy Ragsdale for the tenth time. "If them fellers hadn't bled like stuck pigs an' run down into that cache of a —— cellar nobody'd ever thought o' lookin' under the

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floor. You'd oughta been there, Jim. All the paymaster's money, nearly all o' Old Man Fane's dust an' the money stole from Cutter, besides a raft o' gold slugs an' dust rustled Gawd knows where. My eyes stuck out a foot when me 'n' Johnny pried up them boards an' seen it all. Betcha they's two hundred thousand there when Aronson gets through weighin' her."

"Shouldn't be surprised," Mace nodded. "That outfit shore didn't do a thing while they lasted."

"That Greener shore didn't do a thing to Slay," contributed Mr. Cooley, stroking his whiskers.

"When yuh come to think of it, Johnny's atomizer sort o' put a crimp in them other two boys," said Scotty Mackenzie. "Gents, they was three holes in the red-head—two in his stummick, an' one just over his heart, an' the other feller had one hole in his lung an' another right through his face the longest way. Pretty shootin', lemme tell yuh, pretty shootin'."

"Wonder who that other feller was," puzzled Racey Dawson.

"He's one o' them two besides the red-head we didn't account for at the trial," said Mr. Ragsdale. "Now they's only one missin'. Only one li'l outlaw runnin' 'round loose an' promiscuous."

"We'd oughta got him, too," mourned Mr. Cooley.

"Yuh can't expect everythin'—not in this world," emphasized Mr. Mace. "What gets me is why Mis' Wallace killed herself. She didn't have no call to do it."

"Guess findin' out what her brother was sort o' throwed her. He was shore slick to keep if from her—if he did keep it from her." Scotty Mackenzie cocked a shrewd eye at his friends.

"Shore he did," defended Jim Mace warmly. "She didn't have no hand in the business. Johnny said so, an' we all know——"

"Aw, have it yore own way," interrupted Scotty. "I'll own up I never thought Slay was in the gang, but leopards is a harp with another tune entirely. Yessir, now I know the insides o' the deal the more I'm shore I don't like leopards none."

"What's leopards gotta do with it?" asked Carey.

"A —— uv a lot," grinned Scotty, "only yuh wouldn't understand if I told yuh. Where's Johnny?"

"Down by the Dogsoldier—skippin' stones when he ain't bawlin' out his friends," grumbled Racey Dawson, who, by his manner, knew painfully whereof he spoke.

"What'sa matter with him?" asked Scotty. "Ain't he pleased?"

"Pleased ——! An' I dunno what's the matter with him. I located him down there behind the tamaracks by the big rock, an' he's squattin' on his heels skippin' li'l flat stones 'cross the river. 'A good night's work, Johnny,' says I, an' he grunts at me like a pig. So I seen he needs cheerin' up, an' I cracked him on the back an' told him how Telescope an' me's been figurin' up an' his share o' the reward is near five thousand five hundred dollars. 'It ain't worth it,' says he, kind o' dreary like. 'Djuh want it all?' I screeched at him, an' he cusses an' I cusses, an' after I'd clumb out o' the water I come away an' left him. Which Johnny's too —— playful today to suit yores truly."

"I was wonderin' how yuh got wet," chuckled Ragsdale, winking at the others.

" 'S funny how Johnny come to use the Greener," Racey, with a very red face, said abruptly. "Yuh wouldn't think he'd have time to handle both a shotgun an' a six-shooter against them three fellers."

"He says himself everythin' happened so quick an' sudden he don't really know how he done it," explained Mr. Cooley. "It's likely to be that way sometimes. A gent'll do things an' he dunno how he does 'em. Curious, that is, ain't it?"

ON THE top of a wooded knoll north of Paradise Bend a man sat nursing his knees and a worry.

"Barry an' Lefty shore oughta got back before this," he told himself, and got up and began to walk back and forth. "My Gawd yes. Twelve hours they been gone on a two-hour job."

He began to swear and scuff his boot-toes through the pine-needles. He was a long-jawed citizen, this man, with light blue eyes and hair the color of old rope. His cheeks and chin were covered with a nine-days' growth of stubble. He was not at all a prepossessing person, and his age was a scant thirty years.

" —— fool trick lettin' Slay keep the money an' dust," he grunted. "Bet I'll never see my share of it. Bet somethin' happened."

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Tied to the trunks of near-by pines were three horses. One of these horses was the red-head's blue.

"——!" suddenly exclaimed the long-jawed man. "I ain't a-goin' to take root here, that's a cinch."

He zigzagged down the slope of the knoll and began to walk through the woods in the direction of Paradise Bend. From a side-pocket of his coat he took a pair of field-glasses and began to wipe them with a none-too-clean handkerchief.

Within the hour he returned more speedily than he went.

"Four new-laid graves," he kept repeating between his teeth. "Four new-laid graves. An' they was a crowd on the front porch an' a feller with scales, an' he was a-weighin' dust an' slugs to beat ——. Two hundred an' fifty thousand! Might 'a' knowed they'd look under the floor."

Heartily swearing, he went directly to the three horses and stripped the saddles and bridles from two of them.

"There now," said he, "I guess you won't be needed no more. Let 'er flicker."

He slapped his quirt across the rump of one. They both fled with whisking tails. The man then loosed and mounted the red-head's blue.

"'S funny," said he, as he rode away into the woods, "I always wanted to swap cayuse an' boot for you, hoss, an' Dave just never would trade, said he had a hard enough job swappin' that black-tail dun with Sam for yuh. I told Crail he was a idjit to swap. Yo're twice the hoss that yaller killdevil ever will be. 'S funny, all right. She'll be funnier when you 'n' me come back, hoss. Yessir, you 'n' me are a-goin' to make Paradise Bend sit up on her hind legs an' play tunes before we're through. Nobody can get my share away from me an' not pay for it, nawsir, they can't. What's that piece about the mills o' Gawd grindin' slow but they git there in the end? That's me. I'm one o' them mills. I git there in the end."

But how he got there is another story.

JOHNNY, alternating the skipping of stones with the smoking of many cigarets, ceased not to wallow in the swamp of despair. He wanted Dorothy Burr, and wanted her so much that it hurt. He knew that he might as well wish for the moon. Dorothy's refusal of him had been too definite. There was no getting around that.

And Racey Dawson, the deluded imbecile, trying to hearten him up with the news that almost fifty-five hundred was due him. What did he care for fifty-five hundred? —— the money! —— Racey! —— everybody! He just guessed he'd go back to the Cross-in-a-box, he would. This travelin' 'round wasn't what it was cracked up to be, not by a jugful.

Johnny stuck disgusted hands into his pockets and walked morosely back to the hotel. He paid his bill and went into the barroom for his saddle and bridle. Neither was there.

"Must 'a' left 'em out to the corral," said Johnny, and went there.

But the saddle and the bridle were not at the corral, nor was Johnny's horse within the stockade. Greatly perturbed, Johnny returned to the barroom and spoke to the bartender.

"Why shore," said the bartender, "Buster Ragsdale took yore saddle 'n' bridle about a hour ago. Said they was wanted, so I thought it was all right an' let him take 'em—huh? No, he didn't say nothin' about yore hoss."

Johnny hurried to the Chicago Store. But Buster was not there, nor had his mother seen him since breakfast. Johnny went out into the street and made inquiries. The third man he met told him that he had seen Buster Ragsdale putting Johnny's horse into the Burr corral.

Johnny worriedly pushed back his hat and whistled. His horse in the Burr corral, and the previous night he had taken on his own shoulders the burden of Slay's death! His quixotic chivalry toward a dead woman was apt to cost him dearly. He could not get his horse out and away unobserved. And what would Dorothy say? More than he would care to hear, probably. As has been said, Johnny was not conversant with the mental processes of a woman. He was still the small boy fearful of the rod and the lashing tongue.

Hugely uncomfortable, heartily damning the day he left home, Johnny made his perspiring way to the Burr corral.

"The fool kid!" muttered the exasperated Johnny. "That's shore one —— uv a trick to play on me!"

Stealthily he approached the corral from

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the rear and looked through the stockade. There was his horse, unsaddled, touching noses with one of the Burr mares. The bars of the gate faced the kitchen door.

"Oh, well," said Johnny, and he hitched up his chaps and went to face the worst.

The kitchen door was shut. Johnny, his soul a-squirm with apprehension, knocked with lax knuckles on the door. For a breathless moment there was no sound within. Perhaps they had all gone out. Vain hope. The door opened, and Mrs. Burr appeared, her angular face beaming. Johnny Ramsay did not see the smile. He saw the herald of the executioner plainly.

"Go right in," invited Mrs. Burr, stepping over the door-sill. "I'm a-goin' down street a while. You—you go in."

She gave his arm a pat and a shove. Johnny found himself inside the kitchen. The door closed at his back. There was nobody else in the kitchen. In a corner lay his saddle and bridle. Johnny took one quick step forward—and stopped.

Framed in the doorway going into the other part of the house stood Dorothy Burr. She looked at him coolly. Johnny's knees shook a little. He was scared to death.

"I—I cuc-come for my saddle."

"Did you?" Dorothy said composedly.

She came into the room and stood in front of him and looked him steadily in the eye. Johnny gulped. He strove to return stare for stare. He couldn't. Then he became conscious that Dorothy was speaking.

"How do you suppose your horse and saddle got here?" she asked him patiently.

"I—I dunno—Buster brought 'em."

"I told him to."

"Yuh told him to!"

She nodded, and for the first time since the interview began her eyes wavered. But they came bravely back to his.

"I—I wanted to see you before you went away, and—and I wanted to make sure I would see you."

"Well, yo're seein' me."

Behind her back her hands twisted together. Her round chin quivered.

"You said something to me once. I—I wanted to hear you say it again."

He didn't say it again but took her in his arms and kissed her several times.

"Let me—breathe just once—dear," she said in a muffled voice.

"Plenty o' time for that later."

At this juncture Mrs. Burr peered in at a convenient window.

"My fathers!" she whispered ecstatically and wiped her misting eyes. "Ain't that just too nice for anythin'! I remember when Benjamin used to hug me thataway. Johnny's a real good boy," she added, and sat down on the chopping-block to wait.

Inside the house Johnny and Dorothy were occupying one chair. It was not a large chair, but they managed.

"I thought yuh liked—" began Johnny.

The arm 'round his neck tightened.

"I did *like* him—in a way," said Dorothy soberly. "He was good company and all that, and he was nice to me, and nice men are scarce in the Bend."

"Yuh rode with him a lot." But he pressed his lips to her hair at the end of the sentence.

"Before you came I did it to amuse myself. After you came I did it to stir you up, and you wouldn't stir for the longest time. Why didn't you?"

"I did. Yuh know I did, an' yuh turned me down—cold."

She stirred in his arms, her cheek snuggled against his shoulder.

"Oh, that," said she tranquilly, "was your fault."

"My fault!" Surprisedly.

"Certainly, silly. I had it all planned out just how you were going to propose and everything. It was to be in the moonlight when I had on my best silk and a big bow in my hair and you were to get down on your knees when you asked me to marry you. Instead of that you came busting into kitchen when I was getting supper and laid down the law in your loudest bellow. You didn't even ask me whether I wanted to marry you or not, you just took everything for granted and said I had to. You spoiled all my nice plan and you made me good and mad, and after you'd gone I cried, and I didn't eat any supper, and I cried some more."

"An' yuh wanted to marry me all the time?" said Johnny in amazement. "Even when yuh was tellin' me to drift?"

"Of course, you simple thing. Don't you see——"

"Never mind," he interrupted hastily. "It don't signify now, does it?"

"No," said Miss Burr comfortably, "of course not."

THE END

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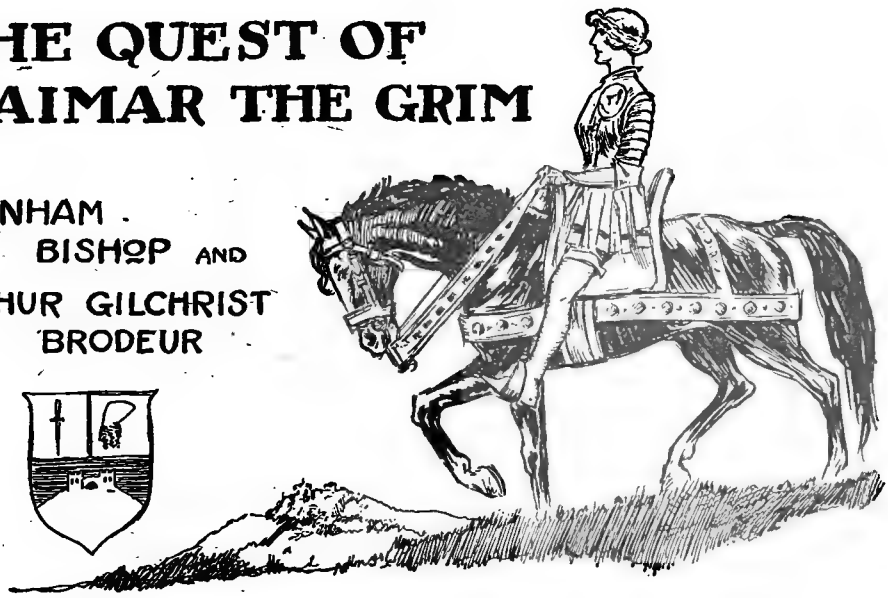
THE QUEST OF GAIMAR THE GRIM

FARNHAM BISHOP AND ARTHUR GILCHRIST BRODEUR



Authors of "The Golden Snare," "The Iron Arm," etc.

"HAVE you never heard how Judith of Teano died?"

Arnulfo, Count of Rocca Forte, rested his gaunt, deep scarred cheek upon one huge hand, and turned toward his lovely daughter eyes as blue as her own, but fierce with impatience and thwarted purpose.

The Lady Fulvia played with the gleaming strands of her tawny hair, and answered nothing.

"Judith," her father persisted, as if the girl had answered his question, "was commanded by her brothers to marry Hugo of Treversari. She refused. Less than a month afterward, her castle was sacked; her men would not fight for a woman, so she was captured by that same Hugo whom she had scorned. He had long coveted her lands. He gave her the choice of marrying him at once, or perishing. Being a woman of spirit, which is to say a fool, she chose death, and Hugo thrust her through with his own sword."

Fulvia sprang to her feet, her eyes flashing.

"The coward!" she cried, "to kill a helpless woman!"

Arnulfo shrugged his shoulders.

"He gave her her choice," he replied coldly.

"But she did not love him!"

"Love is a small matter nowadays," the old warrior answered. "It is the affair of poets and minstrels, who count for little, except to stir up trouble in peaceful families. What counts now is a strong arm and a long sword, my girl. The sooner you get this nonsense of love out of your head the better; the better for Rocca Forte as well as for yourself.

"Look at me closely, daughter. I am not the man I was five years ago; not the man I was last year. My hair is white, my face is wrinkled, my very eyes are growing dim. As for these accursed arms——"

He held out both lean, corded arms, no longer swelling with the round, elastic muscle of former days, but entering upon the atrophy of age. His memory called up recollections of his mighty youth, of desperate charges, fierce assaults, of the overwhelming press of foes, and the give and take of mighty strokes. The stern face relaxed, and the great chest heaved with the sorrow of a strong man grieving for his departed strength.

"And they called me 'Arnulfo of the Iron Arm!' " he said.

Seizing both his outstretched arms, Fulvia laid them about her neck; and stooping, she kissed his forehead.

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"I will hear no more of this, my father," she chided gently. "It has all been said before, and I know it by heart. You are three-score and five, and you can not live much longer; you are growing feeble, so that men no longer fear you. So I, forsooth, must get me a husband, strong and fierce, to protect the land you will soon leave masterless. Rubbish!

"It is not two months since you fell upon Alberic the Lombard as a wolf falls upon a calf. Although you were sick at the time, so that you could scarcely stand, you tore him and his hired ruffians to pieces. Almost alone, overwhelmed with numbers, you wielded your sword in those 'feeble' hands of yours so well that the memory of it will live for a score of years—as you will yourself. I am quite safe with you. What husband could I find in all Sicily half so strong, half so brave?"

The old count smiled, well pleased, but unconvinced.

"Look yonder, across the harbor, where the houses of the town lie so thick along the shore. Those houses, and the peaceful fields beyond them, are filled with men and women, aye, and little children. In a few short years they will all look to you for protection, and what will you do for them? You will be mistress of Rocca Forte, charged with their safety, their meat and drink, the honor of their women, their very lives.

"I will scarce be cold in my grave when the roads will flash with marauding spears, and the greedy hosts that have coveted my lands will race one another for the plunder of Rocca Forte. You are a mere woman. What are these soft, round arms of yours against their pitiless might? I tell you, child, Brunhilda herself would scarce be able to hold her own against our savage Norman barons."

Fulvia's face lighted with interest.

"Brunhilda?" she queried.

"She was a woman of the North, a woman such as you would have been, had you lived in those old days. My Danish grandsire told me her story, when I was no taller than a sword."

So, sitting on the flat, parapetted roof of his castle-hall, Arnulfo repeated the hero-legend of the North, while his Southern-born daughter, perched on the edge of a great stone tank used as a reserve-supply of water in case of siege, swung her dainty feet at the white and crimson blooms which she had planted in shallow troughs about the reservoir.

Intently she listened to the tale; her dark velvet cheeks flushing with excitement, as her father told how Brunhilda, the Valkyr, tricked into marriage with the unworthy Gunnar, wrestled with her husband, overcame him, and hung him up by his belt to a peg in the wall, leaving him there, to be mocked at by his own warriors. Moreover, of all those who had conspired to betray her, Brunhilda left not one alive, but brought red death upon them all, though it cost her own life. And all this she did for love of the hero Sigurd, and for grief and shame that she had been cheated of his love and given to a lesser man.

When the tale was finished, Fulvia clapped her hands, and smiled a little, tight-lipped smile.

"She was a woman indeed! As she was brave and fearless, so will I be!" she cried. "Why should not Fulvia of Rocca Forte dare to live her own life, to avenge her own wrongs, as Brunhilda did?"

Arnulfo chuckled.

"Why, because she was half-fiend, and strong as ten men, whereas you are hardly able to cope with a healthy boy! Look you, child: when I am gone, you will have to defend your land not only against Saracens and Byzantines, but against Normans, the finest and most fearless fighting men on earth! Men who have cut to pieces ten times their weight of Greeks and Lombards, men who have won great kingdoms all over the world! Men whose arms——"

"Those arms are all they have!" Fulvia broke in disdainfully. "I am not foolish enough to oppose my slender strength to theirs. I mean to meet them with my wits. I have already made trial of Norman brains, my father; and I have yet to find a man among them whose wits are as keen as those I inherited from you."

"Wits enough you have, I confess," Arnulfo laughed. "But you lack men. The people of Rocca Forte are too few to hold out. Now if they could but be joined to our neighbors of Castrocavalli——"

"I take back my compliment," Fulvia interrupted. "I must have my brains from my mother, since you can not cloak your schemes better than that. Confess, father; you are trying to marry me to Gaimar of Castrocavalli."

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Arnulfo's eyes, ordinarily steady enough, would not meet hers. He fidgeted uneasily, and at last broke out:

"Well, it is true. What of it? There is not a surer hand with a lance, or a better swordsman, in all Sicily. He rides with a hundred sturdy Normans under his banner, to say nothing of five hundred armed peasants. If you marry him, Rocca Forte will be safe against Saracen, Byzantine, or Lombard—safe even against our own Norman folk, who are the greediest devils out of the infernal regions. All the island rings with his praises: the minstrels have glorified him in a score of songs."

"His peasants do not praise him," Fulvia retorted, fiercely. "It is not for nothing that men call him 'Gaimar the Grim'."

"What in the fiend's name are peasants to you?" Arnulfo demanded bruskly.

For a moment the girl's eyes were hard; but they softened as she gazed at her father's stern old face.

"They are much to me, as they should be to my father's daughter," she answered. "Is it not common talk that you alone, of all the barons of the land, show mercy and justice to your people, Christian and Moslem alike? That you have never plundered the poor, never wronged the helpless, never taken any man's goods nor coveted his women? I love my people well, the helpless most of all. And above all I love the little children, whom Gaimar starves. They love me also, and they tell me many things. I go now to talk with them, and with certain of Gaimar's peasants who have sought refuge in Rocca Forte."

She turned away, toward the stone stair that led down into the hall.

"Go then, but take care to be back by noon," Arnulfo growled after her. "Gaimar will dine with us this day, and he will be sorely disappointed if he does not find you here."

"He will find me," Fulvia responded with ominous gentleness.

SAVE only himself all men knew that Count Arnulfo was his daughter's slave, and that the réal ruler of Rocca Forte was the Lady Fulvia. So, when word came to Jaufré, the captain of Arnulfo's men-at-arms, that his master's daughter desired him to ride with her, he flung down the sword he was grinding, washed oily hands and sweaty face, and mounted in haste.

She was already waiting for him at the outer gate, habited in the flowing and graceful, but cumbrous robes which a lady must wear, even out of doors, in the twelfth century. She sat her huge roan charger as if horse and rider had been carved in one piece. Jaufré's broad, fierce face broke into the smile of a pleased ogre.

Once free of the narrow, zig-zag ramp leading down from the craggy headland on which the castle stood, and out upon the open road, Fulvia drew the lash of her riding-whip gently along the roan's fore-leg, and the great horse struck out into a long, smooth gallop. Jaufré, laboring behind on his heavy Flanders mare, shouted in alarm:

"Rein him in! He will stumble!"

But Fulvia waved her whip at him, and raced on down the steep, rutted slope. It was vile ground for galloping; but the sure-footed roan had perfect confidence in his rider and she in him. Down the hill they thundered without a check and out over the plain at the foot of Rocca Forte.

After a long, brisk canter, Fulvia pulled in her mount and waited for Jaufré. As he lumbered up on his panting charger, the soldier chided her between mouthfuls of dust.

"Is there any man in Rocca Forte who can outride me?" she interrupted him.

"No one," Jaufré growled admission. "Nor is there a better horse in all Sicily than your Roland."

"It is well," Fulvia responded, "for Roland and I are going to take a long ride with you and your men-at-arms this day."

The captain stared at her.

"Can you get three-score mounted men out of the castle without my father's knowledge?" she asked abruptly.

Hard-riding, hard-fighting Norman that he was, Jaufré could not keep pace with his lady's thoughts. He continued to stare for some moments, then shook his head.

"Impossible; besides, there is no reason for it, and ——"

"But there is reason," Fulvia assured him. "I have need of them. You must find some way to get the men out quietly, and bring them to the olive-grove on the outskirts of the town yonder. I have it! While my father is at dinner, you will send the men out one by one, lest he should hear

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the beat of their horses' hoofs. You yourself will come out last. Let each man carry a day's cooked provisions, and be armed for battle."

"But my Lord Arnulfo—" Jaufré protested.

"Your Lord Arnulfo will do nothing, if it is punishment that you fear. I will see to that. Nor do you need to fear any danger to him in your absence, for he will have thirty good men left to hold the castle. Say no more; I will start after you, and overtake you at the grove yonder."

Jaufré said no more. For a little while they rode in silence, till they had reached the edge of the olive-grove, and rode between the thick, gnarled boles of the ancient trees, whose long leaves were coated with limestone-dust from the road. Above them the twigs were yellow with new blooms.

"You have only to get the men out without noise, and bring them safely here before my father rises from the table," she explained. "Once here, they can not be seen from the castle. Now go back, for I am going to see my peasants, and they will not talk before you."

Silently Jaufré turned his horse's head and rode back, puzzling over the ease with which women impose difficult tasks on men.

FROM far down the road to Castrocavalli, something flashed in the bright Spring sunlight. The watchman on the high keep of Rocca Forte strode to the east parapet and gazed down over the plain. Again the flash came, nearer, and as the man-at-arms watched, he saw a low, dense mass of dust rise, extend like a wind-borne cloud, and advance at a steady pace. From the heart of the dust-cloud came the unmistakable gleam of sun on spear-points, and the flash of polished helmets. It was a small troop of heavy-armed cavalry.

"Here they come!" shouted the watchman down the stair.

His cry was answered from the corridor below; and a page ran to the hall with the word that Arnulfo's guests were in sight.

At the old count's summons, kitchen-boys sped about sweating in the hot, dark rooms off the hall; young "bachelors," not yet mature warriors, ran in and set up the tables—huge surfaces of polished olive planking—on the trestles in the hall. Scullery-knaves bore in baskets of silver plates, massive tankards, and embroidered napery of Saracen weave, bright with jewel-like flowers.

Unwindowed, pierced only with long, narrow slits through which archers might shoot upon a beleaguering enemy, the great hall was cool with a refreshing half-darkness. The sun being directly overhead, the light which came in through the arrow-slots was free from the glaring heat which beat upon the tower and castle-rock. The pleasing coolness seemed enchanced by the rich, soft hangings which draped the lofty walls; heavy stuff, almost alive with the ghostly figures of warriors and ladies.

A line of red silk ran through the neck of each embroidered figure, that the Moorish craftsmen who had wrought them in the workshops of Cordova, by thus indicating that the ghostly men and women were not alive, might evade the doom Mohammed laid on him who made images of living things. The deep, amethystine coffering of the high ceiling was invisible; the fluted woodwork of wall and gallery gleamed with a dark, rich polish.

Hardly louder than the murmur of bees, the sound of galloping hoofs and jingling mail stole upon Arnulfo's ears.

"They have not reached the ramp," he commented. "Mathilde, bid the Lady Fulvia prepare to meet her guest."

The serving-woman bowed, and mounted the stair. The noise without grew louder; now the beat of hoofs slowed and rang on stone. The riders were coming up the ramp. Light footsteps ran down the stair.

Bowing low, a steward in black velvet backed in under the portcullis, turned, bowed to Arnulfo, and announced—

"The thrice noble and puissant lord, Gaimar of Castrocavalli!"

Slowly and with dignity, Arnulfo rose from his oaken chair, smoothed the skirts of his furred robe, and adjusted the chains which held his sword in the front of his wide belt. In those troublous times it had not yet become etiquette for a host to receive his guest unarmed: guests were sometimes treacherous. For the same reason, the courtyard outside resounded with the voices of Rocca Forte warriors, who would sit at meat in the bailey with their guests, the men of Castrocavalli, but

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who would sit at meat armed. It was not an age of confidence.

Stopping short in the wide doorway, a huge bulk of a man gazed blindly into the room, his eyes striving to adjust themselves from the brightness outside to the dim light of the hall. Arnulfo, accustomed to the light within, advanced to meet him, and held out his hand.

"Welcome, in my own name and in that of my daughter!" Arnulfo greeted the guest. "I have not seen you here for many months, Gaimar."

Gaimar the Grim seized the proffered hand in an iron grip, his eyes roving meantime about the room.

"Ah!" he cried. "There is my lady!" And striding forward, he advanced to where Fulvia stood in the narrow shaft of light from an arrow-slit.

They made a strongly-contrasted pair. The robber-baron was immeasurably tall, big-barrelled, thick of back and great of shoulder. He was perhaps forty years old; his ruddy face, though fierce and ruthless, bore the sleek firmness of a man who is at once a hard fighter and a comfortable liver. His hair, like the bristles of a boar, was black and stiff; his high nose curved down hawklike over a full, strong mouth and bristling black mustache.

Dwarfed by his immensity, Fulvia lost nothing in majesty by the contrast. Her eyes were calm and assured, her rich color neither more nor less than its wont. Her slender, lithe young figure held itself proudly, and with stately pride she took Gaimar's hand. Like a crowned helmet, her glorious hair sat smooth upon her shapely head, one wide braid coiled over her forehead. She wore a long, gowned mantle of yellow and silver, close-fitting to the waist, and girdled with a broad, pearl-crusted belt of Moorish leather.

Gaimar looked long at her, holding her hand in his, his rough soul strangely stirred by her calm beauty. At last—

"Will it please you to eat?" Arnulfo invited; and the three seated themselves at the table.

After pages had knelt at their feet with golden basins and linen towels, for which the hot and dusty Gaimar was thoroughly grateful, the food was brought in by a host of swarthy Arab servants. Course followed course in a rapid succession which testified as well to the hunger of the guest as to the splendor of the time. Arnulfo and Fulvia, however, with the temperate restraint of most aristocratic Normans, ate but little of each dish. Gaimar plied fingers and dagger eagerly, cutting off large gobbets and thrusting them into his mouth with obvious relish. Between courses the pages brought in water and towels again, and cleansed the fingers of the eaters.

At last, when goblets of many-hued Moorish glass had replaced the plates, Gaimar thrust back his chair, and flung himself forward, elbows on the table. At the same moment Fulvia, catching sight of Jaufré's figure at the door, nodded as in answer to a signal, and excused herself from the table. Gaimar scowled blackly.

Fulvia found Jaufré at the door, nervous and sullen. Furtively, in whispers that did not reach the center of the huge hall, he spoke:

"Not a man can I or will I take from the garrison so long as Gaimar keeps his rascals about the castle," he said. "Who knows but he meditates some treachery? He has brought thirty men-at-arms with him, all armored, with sword and lance. You can see them there in the bailey, eating our food and drinking our good wine. You will have to give over your plans, my lady, whatever they may be."

Fulvia looked out into the flagged court. There, about a dozen rough tables, sat the troopers of Rocca Forte and Castrocavalli, drinking and jesting together. The guests were indeed full-armored, and so were the garrison, for since the time when he had been surprised by Alberic the Lombard, Arnulfo had taken no chances.

"We will wait till Gaimar has gone, taking his riders with him," Fulvia whispered back. "I would not have you strip the garrison now; besides, if assembled in the olive-grove, they might spy us, since they pass there on their way home. Wait till they are gone half an hour's space; then we will ride forth. I will come to the foot of the ramp; do you have Roland waiting there."

Before Jaufré could object, she had turned back into the hall.

Arnulfo raised his eyebrows questioningly.

"The men were not getting enough wine," she explained. "Jaufré asked leave to bring them some flagons of the black Catanian."

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Once more Gaimar faced his hosts across the table.

"I DID not come hither merely to taste your wine and enjoy your hospitality," he began bluntly. "I came because it seemed good to me that your lands and mine should be joined in a firmer bond than that which unites neighbors. You are getting old, Arnulfo, and I am weary of living alone. I came to ask for your daughter's hand.

"But when I came, and saw your daughter for the first time in many months, I thought the joining of lands a small thing compared to the winning of so much beauty. I am a strong man; the Lady Fulvia is a lovely woman. What more fitting than that we should marry? If you grant me this, I will swear on my father's bones to defend you and her, to follow your banner in battle, and to be your man so long as you may live. What do you say?"

Arnulfo looked at Fulvia, and an uneasy expression crossed his face.

"Let the girl speak," he evaded. "I put no compulsion on my daughter: she shall marry the man of her choice."

Fulvia rose, gripping the edge of the table with white hands. It was no easy thing she had now to do, for, brute that Gaimar was, he was no mere ruffian like Alberic, whom she had flouted a few weeks before; nor was he merely cunning and treacherous, like Ricoberto, who had laid contemptible snares for her in vain. Her heart almost misgave her for a moment; but that which she knew burned hot within her, and she mastered her hesitation.

"Seignor Gaimar," she spoke softly and clearly, "I thank you for the compliment you have paid my poor beauty, and for the protection which you offer my father. He does not need it, nor do I.

"Knowing well why you have come, I have thought out your answer well. It is here, behind this curtain."

And stepping to the wall by the stair, she drew aside one of the heavy tapestries, which the darkness of the room had kept in shadow. Still hidden in the dimness, a little figure cowered in the corner; but Fulvia stretched out her hand and drew it into the light. It was a tiny girl, ragged, undersized, with elf-locks about a dirty, tear-stained face.

Gaimar stared in puzzled bewilderment. Suddenly the child caught sight of him, and screamed in abject terror, burying her face in Fulvia's robe. But with infinite tenderness, Fulvia clasped the frightened child close to her, stroking the wet cheeks, and crooning gentle encouragement.

At last Gaimar seemed to recognize the child. His face grew red with fury.

"What in the devil's name does that peasant's litter do here?" he barked.

Fulvia turned eyes of fury on him.

"You shall see," she answered. "Come forth!"

From his hiding-place behind the further end of the hanging, there stepped a man, little, bent, and squalid. He might have been of any age, except that he was manifestly not young. His clothing was a bundle of vile rags; his form was shriveled and wasted; but the eyes that blazed in his leathery face were vigorous, clear and savage with hate. He stretched out one arm toward Gaimar—an arm without a hand.

"Speak, Gian!" Fulvia commanded.

And the little man spoke, with a voice dry and toneless, yet somehow instinct with unquenchable anger. Gaimar, as if fascinated, could not withdraw his eye, could not speak.

"I am Gian, the peasant, whom men call the 'One-Handed,'" he said, and looked toward Arnulfo as if uncertain whether to go on.

But Arnulfo, catching his daughter's eye, nodded; and Gian continued:

"He who sits there at your table, Gaimar, the tyrant, was my master. I served him well, wasting my strength in his fields, spilling my blood in his wars. I was true and faithful to him."

Gaimar suddenly found his voice.

"Aye," he roared, "he was my man, till I turned him out for treachery. Now he comes here, doubtless to tell false tales against me. Bid him hold his tongue, and give him up to me, that I may deal with him as he deserves!"

"You seem to fear what he may say, Lord Gaimar," Fulvia coldly interrupted. "And when you say that you turned him away, you speak falsely. I myself know that he has been harnessed to one of your grain-mills, turning the heavy stone with the toil of aching shoulders until he escaped three months ago. He shall speak his fill."

Gaimar sprang to his feet, his hand on

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his sword; but Arnulfo, whose eyes had never left his, sternly bade him be seated.

"You slay no peasants in my house," he said. "If the fellow says aught that is false about you, I will punish him myself; but if you have nothing to fear from him, there is no reason why he should not speak."

And speak the man did. With unfaltering, dreadful calm, he told how his faithful service had met with a terrible reward. One night, returning to his hut from one of Gaimar's battles, with bleeding wounds incurred in Gaimar's defense, he had found his master before him. Gian's wife was struggling in the clutch of one of Gaimar's soldiers, while Gaimar looked on and laughed; the children cowered in a corner of the hut, frightened by their mother's screams. With that courage which even the oppressed show in defense of their loved ones, Gian had ordered his master out of his house. His answer was a blow in the face; and when the peasant drew his knife, he was disarmed and beaten.

Tearing himself from the soldier's grasp, his wife saved her honor by stabbing herself before her children's eyes. Then Gaimar, furious at the loss of his prey, had hewn off his serf's hand with his own sword, and condemned him to the fearful labor of the mill. Even his ruined home was reft from him; when, after his escape, he had returned to it, he had found it a heap of blackened embers. But for the Lady Fulvia's care, his children would have starved.

When the black tale was ended, Fulvia looked full into Gaimar's raging eyes, and said:

"Once more, Seignor, I thank you for the protection you have offered me and mine. Doubtless you would keep me safe from violence and shame, as you kept these others that trusted you."

Beside himself with humiliation and anger, Gaimar looked from Fulvia to Arnulfo, and back to Fulvia.

"You red-haired baggage!" he cried. "You shall pay dearly for your mockery! I will avenge this insult with your blood and tears! And you, Arnulfo, look to your defenses! I will take this wench with or without her consent, and then, by the twelve apostles! I will break her till she follows at my heels like a dog!"

Arnulfo rose swiftly, hand on sword, his eyes flashing.

"Until you reach the border of your own land," he said, with ominous calm, "you are safe from me or mine. After that, look out for yourself. And now get out, with every son of perdition in your band! Be swift, for even my patience has an end."

His face a mask of hatred, Gaimar backed toward the portcullis, as if on guard against sudden attack. Once out in the courtyard, he wheeled sharply, and cried out in a dreadful voice:

"To horse, Castrocavalli! Death to the last man through the gate!" And snatching his bridle from a groom, he bounded into the saddle. In hot haste, with the fear of death to urge them on, his men ran about the court, snatched up their lances, mounted and spurred through the outer gate In the flurry of their panic, they crashed into one another, jammed in the narrow turns of the ramp, slipped and stumbled down the slope, and finally emerged by ones and twos, the men disheveled, their horses foaming and snorting with the sense of their riders' excitement.

Callously cutting the last man down, as he had promised, Gaimar turned in his stirrups and shook his red sword at the square tower of Rocca Forte.

Facing each other in the hall, Arnulfo and Fulvia stood; she white and resolute, he stern and qestioning.

"What does this mean?" he asked.

"This is the fruit of my visits among the peasants," she explained. "You know how our Normans oppress their people. From you alone have they ever known justice; from me alone have they ever known love. And to me they have told what no other Norman knows—what I may not even tell you, my father, unless you pledge me your knightly word to keep it secret."

"Say on—your secret and theirs is safe with me."

"Listen: there is here in Sicily a veritable society of the oppressed. Unknown to their masters, they meet at night, in secret places, and tell the long tale of their wrongs. Because I love them they talk to me; and so I learned of this deed of Gaimar's, together with many other of his cruelties. Would you have me marry such a man?"

Arnulfo looked into her eyes.

"No," he said shortly, and turned on his heel.

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IBN HAWWAS, the learned Arabian physician, found the old count pacing his chamber, gnawing his finger-nails and trembling with the violence of his rage. After much persuasion, Hawwas managed to induce his lord to go to bed, lest the anger that consumed him bring back the fever which he had shaken off but a fortnight before. And to make sure that sleep came, Ibn Hawwas gave him a sleeping-draft.

Fifteen minutes later, Fulvia, clad in the armor which she had once stripped from her enemy Ricoberto, after she had slain him with her own hands, met Jaufré in the courtyard.

"Are your men ready to march?" she asked.

Jaufré started to protest, but she turned on him with anger such as he had never seen in her eyes before.

"Her father!" he muttered to himself. "She has her father's own look! It will go ill with some one this day!"

The third hour after noon saw them riding down the long, many-angled ramp cut out of the face of the crag, three-score hardy Norman men-at-arms, Jaufré and Fulvia at their head. Between the two trotted a swift, rough-haired native pony, bearing the grim, avenging figure of Gian the One-Handed. The lances of the horsemen stood in their stirrup-sockets like a deadly forest; their mail flashed in the sun, a portent of death.

"Where do we ride, Lady Fulvia?" demanded Jaufré.

"To Castrocavalli."

"But——"

"Not a word! There is a score to be settled between Gaimar and myself, in which I need your help. I mean to deal with him as Brunhilda dealt with those who offended her, nor will he be likely to forget it soon."

"I do not know the Lady Brunhilda," Jaufré began hesitatingly. "She is no Sicilian. But we shall not overtake Gaimar before he reaches his castle, since he has near an hour's start of us."

"That we shall," Fulvia retorted. "Gian here knows a way that is leagues shorter than the main road."

Nor could Jaufré get her to utter another word till they had reached the bulging buttresses of the Madonian Mountains, whose huge pinnacles tower from four to six thousand feet above the sea, cone-like, blue-shaded with the green of olive-groves, their wooded, snow-streaked summits rising above the chestnut forests of the upper slopes.

For two hours they had followed the road, where the deep dust now hid, now betrayed, the trail of Gaimar's horsemen.

"Here!" Gian's voice broke the silence, and his hand grasped Fulvia's bridle.

"But there is no road!" Jaufré protested.

"Through the olive-groves!" answered their guide; and digging his naked heels into his pony's flanks, urged the beast at a gallop between the low trees beside the road.

Fulvia dashed after him, and the rest followed perforce. The low branches swishing their faces, they emerged at last into a deep gulch between two ridges, hidden from the road by the bulk of the outer ridge, whose flank they had just ascended. The walls of the gulch, overgrown with laurel, sloped precipitately to a narrow practicable way through which murmured a spring-fed stream.

Now they were in the shadow of the mountain-walls; the coolness was delightful. As they rode, startled birds broke off singing to plunge through the leaves on each side, and soared up into the blue.

Steadily ascending, they had reached a height of perhaps a thousand feet when the pass opened out upon a rounded hillside shaggy with high donax-grass. Gian suddenly turned off into the midst of this thicket, and vanished among the swaying stems. Following him, the riders found a narrow path stretching straight as a lance as far ahead as they could see. Above it, the grass stood higher than a mounted man, and arched over it so that no traces of the path could be seen at a distance; but there it lay at their feet, inviting them.

"This secret way," Gian explained, "runs, straighter than any highroad, to the forest of Cania, on the border between your father's land and Gaimar's."

"I know that forest," Fulvia commented thoughtfully. "It is of oak and chestnut; the crowns of its trees lie thick enough to conceal the advance of a host, but between the trunks there are long, straight avenues. It is as if it had been planted by the hands of men."

"So it was, if the tales of our grandfathers are true," Gian assured her. "Though no

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man knows who the planters were, I myself have found old, carven stones lying under heaps of leaf-mold and mast, mossy, with strange writing under the moss. I scraped one of them, and found the stone stained dull-brown, as if with ancient blood."

From mid-afternoon till sunset they rode down that strange, straight way, made by some one of the many races who had ruled and perished in Sicily aforetime. At sundown they halted long enough to snatch a meal from their saddlebags and wash it down with a swallow of wine, and then pushed on by the light of the newly-risen moon.

It was past moonset when the weary troop debouched into a forest glade, the thick donax-stalks closing after the horsemen. The leaders halted the men behind them at the proper distance, rode back, and counted the riders as they emerged from the tall grass. Without noise or confusion, the veteran troopers formed in column of twos. Guided by the strip of starlit sky between the wide-spreading chestnuts on either hand, Gian led the Normans toward the western end of the forest, their chain-mail jingling faintly, their horses' hoofs silent on the thick carpet of leaves and moss.

Presently they came to a clearing where was the sound of running water. Here Gian reined in his pony.

"Halt and rest," he said in a low voice to Jaufré. "You have two hours till daylight, and two more before Gaimar comes. Post your clumsy Norman sentries if you will—*my* sentries are all about you. Sleep soundly and without fear."

So saying, the little peasant melted away into the dark. Jaufré looked to the Lady Fulvia; she was already off-saddling Roland. Soon she was stretched out on the turf, asleep, with her saddle for a pillow.

DAWN came; the camp awoke, stretched itself, ate, and made ready for what might befall. Gian appeared from nowhere, and led Fulvia and Jaufré a little distance to the edge of the wood.

A bow-shot before and below them the highroad, curving around the rim of the wood, ran through a compact little village of a single street of dirty, limestone-stucco huts. The largest and most important-looking building in the place had painted above its door a bright yellow disc with scarlet spines sticking out of it in all directions.

"The tavern of the Sun," said Gian, pointing. "There Gaimar with his thirty is to meet seventy more of his men-at-arms and five hundred armed peasants. The horsemen will be there to meet him at the hour appointed; but the peasants will be tardy."

"How do you know this, fellow?" demanded Jaufré.

"The serfs of the levy, the grooms in the cavalry stables, the table-knaves listening behind the arras in Gaimar's hall, are all my brethren. They send me the place and time of the muster, the orders to the men-at-arms, the counsels of Gaimar and his captains.

"Little is said in your Norman castles that is not heard in the hovel."

"Gaimar planned to have his forces assembled here, near the border, when he asked for my hand," interposed Fulvia, before the blunt Jaufré could say what he thought of Gian and his brethren. "Had I accepted him, he would have sent them word to disperse. But he made ready, should I refuse him, to strike before we of Rocca Forte could prepare. Having learned these things, and knowing what my own reply would be, I have made ready to strike him here, as he drinks his wine and dreams not of danger.

"This being Gaimar's own land, the safe-conduct my father gave him to the border does not hold. And this is how I propose to strike."

She explained her plan rapidly but carefully; Jaufré nodded admiring assent to every crisp sentence. When she had finished he spoke.

"You must not ride with us into the fight, Lady Fulvia," he said, with the note of command in his voice.

"Gaimar is a valiant captain, and his men are fierce. Your life is too precious to risk."

"This is my task," Fulvia reminded him, "and you are my servant."

"Not your servant, but your father's. I am responsible to him for your life. Either you keep out of the fight, or I lead the men back over the border, now."

Seeing the stubbornness in his face, Fulvia knew better than to insist further.

"So be it," she agreed, reluctantly.

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THE sultry air pulsed with the roistering merriment of a hundred hard-drinking men-at-arms in and about the tavern of the Sun. Their foreheads were bare of the heavy helmets, their long mail hauberks were open at the throat, as they quenched their hot thirst with the heady red wine of Castrocavalli. Gaimar alone sat silent and sullen as he drank, waiting impatiently for his infantry to come up, that he might carry the war into Rocca Forte.

Fearing no foe, he had placed no outposts. At each end of the solidly built-up street, two bored and thirsty troopers kept the hundred horses from straying out into the open country. The street was full of chargers, without halters, hobbles, or horse-holders; none was needed.

Of the ordinary inhabitants of the village, besides the greasy-haired Greek tavern-keeper and his servants, there was not a sign; every house except the wine-shop was shut and barred. Peaceful folk ran away or hid when Gaimar and his ruffians rode by.

The two men-at-arms at each end of the street kept their eyes fixed on the tavern door, impatient for the coming of their reliefs. It was not until he heard the beating of hoofs on the hard road behind him that one of them turned his head.

"Haro!" he cried. "To horse!"

Out of the field of ripening wheat between the road and the forest's edge came a column of cavalry, plowing through the tall grain four abreast, turning into the road not fifty yards away, the front rank already bearing down on him with leveled lances.

"Rocca Forte! Rocca Forte!" they shouted as they came.

Up the street ran the man who had first spied them, crying the alarm, while his comrade scrambled into the saddle of the nearest horse. But for the moment the other ninety-nine horses were riderless. Veteran chargers all, they knew a charge when they saw one coming, and that there was no time now for their masters to mount and meet it. Before the Rocca Forte men reached one end of the street, all the Castrocavalli horses, save Gaimar's own gelding, a magnificent, long-limbed black, were stampeding out of the other, hurling aside or trampling under foot the few who tried to stop them.

With the roar of an angry bull, Gaimar the Grim shot out from the tavern door, a half-gnawed beef bone in one hand, a naked sword in the other. Tugging at their sword-hilts and clapping on their helmets as they came, his men bunched up behind him. There was no chance to form a shield-wall or a spear-hedge, for the shields were banging against the ribs of the fleeing horses and the lances, spilled out of the sockets, were strewn all down the road.

Before the mob could get into any sort of formation, the avalanche of Rocca Forte men struck and crashed through them with bloody lances. The charging column filled the street from wall to wall, leaving no room for the swing of a sword. Of the fifty or so of Gaimar's men who had had time to get out of the tavern door, seven were thrust through with lances, and a dozen more trampled to unconsciousness or death.

Without having lost a man, the charging troop pulled up as it came out of the far end of the street, wheeled 'round in the open, faced to the rear, and halted, an impenetrable wall, behind the shattered remnants of Gaimar's company. Now Gaimar cried aloud to his shaken men to rally, and reformed them to face the horsemen. Out of the tavern came the rest of his followers, eager for the fray. As soon as the last of them was over the threshold, the trembling Greek landlord closed and barred the door.

Nearly four-score effectives now stood, drawn up across the street and grimly clutching their swords; but the Rocca Forte cavalry were between them and their homes. As he studied his foes, Gaimar burst into a grim shout of laughter.

"At them, cowards!" he cried. "There are no more than thirty of them!"

It was true. Overborne by sheer surprise and the weight of horseflesh, his fighting Normans had been ridden through by inferior numbers.

Gaimar's men surged forward, and the thirty horsemen, lances lowered, spurred to meet them. And now, with a sound like rolling thunder, a fresh body of horse surged out of the wheatfield and swept down upon the dismounted men of Castrocavalli from the rear. A trumpet sounded, the charging troopers before and behind stopped short, their lances still menacing. Gaimar and

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his unshielded followers were hemmed in between two bristling walls of mounted men.

"Yield!" Jaufré called from the front rank of the second troop. "Cast down your swords or we charge!"

Normans of the true fighting strain, Gaimar's men would have fought to the death against any odds, so long as there was a chance to die striking; but here there was no chance, and they knew it. Let Jaufré give the word, and they would be spitted by the long lances, or crushed beneath the iron hoofs of the chargers, without the hope of getting in a single blow. Sullenly, most of them threw down their useless weapons. Only a few reckless ones still held their ground defiantly.

Gaimar did neither. His horse alone had not stampeded, its careful groom having haltered it to a ring in the tavern wall. As lightly as if he wore no armor, Gaimar now sprang to the saddle, snatched up the long lance from beside the door, cut through the taut halter with his sword, and drove his spurs into his horse's flanks. Bursting through the disordered ranks of his own men he dashed diagonally across the street and leaped his horse over a low turf wall between two houses.

A Rocca Forte man detached himself from the rear rank, and dashed 'round the end of the row of houses in time to bar the baron's path. Lance to lance they met; the trooper fell with the stump of his shattered weapon in his hand and Gaimar's spear thrust through his body. Leaving it there, Gaimar reddened his rowels in his horse's flank as he sped for safety.

While two-score Rocca Forte riders overpowered the remnant of resistance, and disarmed the beaten men, the remaining score galloped down the road in pursuit of the fugitive. At first they rode together; then the swifter mounts drew ahead, and soon the pursuers were strung out along the road for several hundred yards.

Jaufré rode among the foremost; and at his side thundered a great roan horse, its rider's tawny hair streaming behind her in the wind of her own speed. Now she shot ahead, and Jaufré snatched at her bridle.

"I kept my word!" she shouted. "The fight is over; now I ride on!" And she galloped past, far in the lead.

The road ceased, but the chase continued over the level plain, through gardens, grain fields and meadows. The foremost pursuers, Fulvia and Jaufré, were gaining on the fleeing baron. Four miles still to the shelter of his castle, and little hope of reaching it.

Suddenly Fulvia gave a loud, clear cry. Rising in her stirrups she gazed ahead, then turned and waved her hand to Jaufré. Ahead of the fleeing Gaimar, blocking his path, rose a high wall of weathered limestone, extending in both directions as far as the eye could see! It was the remnant of a forgotten civilization: the defense of some vanished Roman villa of long ago.

But Gaimar neither stopped nor slackened. Riding straight for the wall, as if intending to dash himself to pieces against it, he gave the horse its head. The splendid animal gathered its legs under it and soared like a swallow over the wall.

With a cry of admiration, Fulvia urged her great roan to follow. As she neared the wall, Jaufré gave a warning shout; but she never heeded. She struck her horse's head with the flat of her hand, cried "On, Roland!" and cleared the wall in one great bound.

Jaufré, knowing his heavy Flanders mare could not make the leap, nevertheless drove her to it. The ponderous charger sprang, struck her knees against the top course, and fell to the ground, a shattered thing. Jaufré barely freed his feet from the stirrups in time, rolling to safety just as the huge mare came down. Stopping only to thrust his sword through the dying animal's heart, he cried to the strung-out line of his followers, and ran as fast as his legs would carry him along the wall.

It was too high for a mailed man to scale; he must go around. Terrible thoughts raced through his brain. If he should be too late—if Fulvia, single-handed against the brutal strength of Gaimar. . . .

BEHIND the wall a wood of ancient beeches stretched as far as the eye could see. Through it, at desperate speed, rode Gaimar and Fulvia. At last, hearing the hoof-beats of but a single horse behind him, Gaimar turned in his saddle. For a moment he stared at the vision of a girl's bright face, streaming tawny hair, and flashing sword; then, with a shout of triumph, he wheeled and rode straight for her.

Nor did she flee. The long, light sword clenched in her hand, Fulvia sped to mee

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him, staking all on her certainty of what the man would do. And he did as she expected. Drawing his own sword, Gaimar swerved as he came up to her, preparing to strike her weapon from her hand, then catch her 'round the waist and pluck her from the saddle as the steeds met and passed.

Anticipating just this, Fulvia swung her horse to meet his, drove her spurs home, and charged. The great roan Roland crashed at full gallop into Gaimar's mount, his mighty shoulder meeting that of the lighter beast with terrific impact. Weight and speed told; Gaimar's horse went down, and Gaimar with it, full sprawl on the soft forest floor, his left leg pinned under his fallen beast. His sword flew from his grasp, landing full ten feet away. With difficulty, Fulvia kept raging Roland from trampling fallen horse and man to death. Quieting the roan, she sat proudly above her overthrown adversary.

But Gaimar stirred not, for he was stunned with the force of his fall. His head, which had struck first, oozed blood below the rim of his helmet, which had been jammed down almost to his eyes.

Fulvia considered a moment; then, taking the coiled picket-rope from her cantle, she dismounted and stood over the unconscious man. Plucking the long dagger from his belt, she thrust it through her own. Then swiftly she passed the rope's end 'round his waist, knotted it firmly behind his back in a knot which one of her father's seamen had taught her, cast the other end of the long rope over the branch of a stout oak, and made it fast to the high pommel of her saddle. Taking the clay water-bottle that hung beside it, she dashed the contents over Gaimar's face, ran back to Roland and sprang into the saddle.

Gaimar stirred, groaned, and opened his eyes. Slowly he turned on to his left side, but got no farther, for the weight of his horse on his prisoned leg wrung a second groan from him. Resting his head on one arm, he looked up and saw Fulvia. He cursed vehemently, but she said nothing. At last, his pride yielding to his cunning, he entreated—

"Help me out from under this accursed beast, most gracious lady!"

Then, noticing for the first time the rope which encircled his waist, he reached for his dagger and found an empty sheath.

"Here it is, Seignor Gaimar," said Fulvia, holding up the captured weapon. "I can not let you cut the rope, for then how could I free you from the horse's weight? Nor can I let you stab me after I have freed you."

"I will never harm you!" he protested, "for I love you. Did I not run my head into this trap for your sake? I swear by the four Gospels that if you set me free, I will never raise my hand against you or yours again."

"I will set you free, before me, in this lonely spot, and so test your faith," the girl answered fearlessly. "I warn you, break not your word, or swift and terrible will be your punishment."

Riding a pace or two nearer, Fulvia struck her whip along Roland's near foreleg; and the roan lashed out with his hoof, striking Gaimar's prostrate horse sharply on the rump. The fallen animal heaved and rolled; Fulvia backed Roland to the length of the rope; and when the fallen horse's plunges raised its weight a little from its left side, the trained roan backed once more, smartly. The rope over the oak limb grew taut, and Gaimar felt himself pulled free.

"Now, wench, I have you!" he snarled as he leaped to his feet, with vicious triumph on his face.

With outstretched, clutching hands he ran to catch and drag her from the saddle, before her horse could turn and get up speed. The distance between them was so short that it seemed certain that an active man on foot could easily accomplish this.

But in mid-stride, he felt himself caught and held. For the first time, Gaimar realized that the rope did not lie slack on the grass between him and the rider, but ran over the oak limb high above his head. Desperately he braced his feet and tried to untie the knots that felt so strange to his fumbling fingers.

Laughing in his face, Fulvia signaled again to Roland. Steadily the great horse backed; irresistibly Gaimar felt himself dragged backward, plucked from his feet, and lifted into the air! Not until the man was dangling eight feet above the earth did Roland stop; then Fulvia guided him 'round and 'round the trunk, winding the rope about the bole, till she was able to cast it loose from the pommel and knot it fast 'round the tree.

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All this Gaimar was powerless to prevent. Again and again, as she rode past, he reached out for her; each time, dangling by the middle, he overbalanced; and his head pointed dizzily toward the earth. Again he fumbled at the rope; but now it was stretched by his weight so that he could not reach the knots—nor would it have helped him if he could, for no landsman could have untied them.

Leaving him in mid-air, to blaspheme in all the motley tongues of Sicily, Fulvia dismounted, and grasped the bridle of the prostrate horse. With a strong tug, and gentle words of encouragement, she helped him to his feet. He was uninjured, but trembled pitifully.

Twenty yards further the forest aisles opened out into a glade, through which a grass-bordered stream flowed gently. Thither Fulvia led the horse, red Roland following at her whistle. While the chargers were washing the dust of chase and battle out of their throats, she wandered along the water's edge, plucking vivid-hued flowers and gathering them in her helmet. When the horses had drunk all that was safe for them, she led them back to the scene of Gaimar's penance. Like a huge frog, he hung there from the mighty oak, arms and legs lashing out convulsively as he struggled to preserve his balance.

"This has been an inglorious quest for you, Lord Gaimar," she twitted him. "There you hang, as strange a fruit as ever your fair trees bore. It is a lovely land which you adorn thus ungracefully."

He growled an oath.

"Too lovely for such a one as you," her accusing voice went on, "who know not how to rule it."

"The fiend seize you!" Gaimar burst out. "Have you not done enough, without torturing me with your mockery? When I escape from this accursed rope, I will show you that I rule this land well enough, aye, and sternly."

"You rule it very badly," she corrected him, "otherwise, how could I, a woman, have taken it from you? Today I have outschemed you, outfought you, and outtilted you in single combat. Call you this good ruling?"

Gaimar began a hot retort; but he bethought himself in time that it was no answer to protest that not she but her warriors had outfought him, that not she, but luck had overthrown him. After all, it was no credit to him that her sixty men had surprised his five score, that a woman's wit and courage had forced fortune to play into her hand.

"No, you have made a pitiful ruler," the merciless voice beat upon his ears. "For you did not know that the first necessity of rule is justice. You have robbed, tortured, outraged your peasants till they hate you worse than any outland foe. Listen!"

THROUGH the dim forest distance came the faint, far, pulsing tramp of many men on foot. Gaimar's eyes gleamed with momentary triumph.

"That is doubtless the sound of your peasant levies marching hither," Fulvia observed calmly. "It is nigh two hours past the time when they were to have met you at the tavern of the Sun, is it not? It was a pretty thought, in case your suit for my hand was refused, to march back peacefully and have your forces ready to join you at the border, and fall on Rocca Forte ere my father could muster his men."

Gaimar, purple-faced, gasped like a choking fish.

"You are in league with the devil! How knew you my most secret plans? How came you and your men-at-arms hither, faster than mortal horsemen ever rode, and invisible when you passed me on the road I took before you? How dare you tarry here, baiting me to fury, when you hear and recognize the tramp of the host that will rescue me?"

A silvery laugh rippled in Fulvia's throat.

"Are you sure it will rescue you from my strong hands?" she jibed. "It is made up of your serfs, whom you have enslaved, forced into service, abused with a hundred cruelties. What service do you expect from men who hate you? What stranger to Castrocavalli could have guided me and my three score lances hither by secret forest-ways and mountain-paths that you yourself do not dream of?"

"When your tyranny drove the wretched from your lands, they came to me, and learned what love could do to heal their torn bodies and crushed hearts. You do not know it, but the oppressed poor of Sicily, forced to a miserable union by the

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harshness of such as you, have banded themselves into a society of broken men and desperate women. Their need has taught them to go from estate to estate, from province to province, by secret forest-ways and mountain-paths that you do not dream of.

"It was by such a way that one of your own thralls guided me and my three score lances thither, so that I arrived in time to cut you off, though I left after you. When you bade your peasant-troops assemble and meet you on the border of my father's land, it was easy to guess that you planned a secret attack on Rocca Forte; and those in the host whose dear ones you had wronged bore the word swiftly to me. The very women and children, weak before your sword and whip, are strong to overthrow your evil purposes."

"So may the saints lengthen my purgatory," swore Gaimar, "if I do not crucify Gian the One-Handed above his own burned roof-tree!"

"You had best pray the saints that Gian may not first slay you," Fulvia admonished sternly. "But Heaven will decide soon, for your levies are at hand!"

The tramp of feet beat in their ears; the host was near at hand. Sensing the tense set of Gaimar's lips, Fulvia spoke swiftly.

"Nay, do not call to them! Hark behind! You can hear, farther off, but coming fast, the hoof-beats of my horsemen, who have found their way 'round the wall. You are a Norman, and know well how a few mailed riders can tear their way through twenty times their weight of badly-armed peasants. You will but call your men to destruction; it will not help you, and it will mean their death, poor folk.

"Have pity on them—and on yourself. Yield yourself to me, rescue or no rescue; swear to be a kind lord to your people henceforth, and I will release you. Then no man will have seen you hanging here, like a spider from her thread. But if you give the alarm, and death follows to a single peasant or a single man of mine, you will bring upon yourself shame that is worse than death.

"All Sicily will laugh to hear how Gaimar of Castrocavalli, Gaimar the Grim, Gaimar the idol of the minstrels, was plucked from his saddle by a girl, and hung on high for a spectacle. I think the minstrels will make another sort of song about you then!"

Nearer, thumping through the wood, came the tramp of the infantry; nearer sounded the pound of galloping horses.

"Do you call!" Fulvia entreated.

But Guimar, furious with shame and mad for revenge, cried with a ringing voice:

"Rescue! To me, Gaimar! To me!"

A shout, and the van of his five hundred peasants, Greek, Latin, and bearded Saracen, erupted from the wood-ways: a horde of ill-fed, ragged, half-armed serfs, brandishing rusty spears, hunting-knives, flails, axes, and scythes.

In an instant, Fulvia had sprung to Roland's back, and blown a shrill blast on her silver whistle. A thunderous cry of "Rocca Forte!" and Jaufré burst forth from the wood behind her, at the head of forty mounted men-at-arms. Forced to fall back nearly to the village, to avoid broad swamps lying at either end of the wall, he had brought with him every man not needed to guard the disarmed and dispirited prisoners shut up in the tavern of the Sun.

"Down lances!" he shouted, and the forty spear-points dropped to the charge.

"Hold!" cried Fulvia, riding between the forces. "Let none dare to strike!"

Then both sides saw the wondrous spectacle between them: Gaimar the dreaded tyrant, a helpless pendulum between earth and sky, pawing the air and kicking furiously in frantic efforts to keep head higher than heels. The two armed hosts halted in sheer amazement; a Lombard snickered, a Saracen laughed; and straightway every man, Christian and Moslem, peasant and man-at-arms, burst into uproarious, helpless laughter. Serfs that had trembled at Gaimar's name rolled on the turf and howled in glee while the tall Normans rocked in their high-peaked saddles.

When men were out of breath and the noise had abated, Fulvia rode forward and addressed the peasants.

"Ye who have been oppressed, behold how your oppressor has fared at the hands of a girl! He was always a bully; now you see him something less than a man: a mere plaything for a woman! If you would be free of him, speak, and you shall be free forever!"

Then, turning to the Rocca Forte men, she commanded:

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"You, Berard, ride to my father, and tell him that he and his host will find me blockading the tiny garrison left in Castrocavalli Castle! Gaimar is deposed from his holdings, never to rule again! He shall be an outcast in the land, with no friend save his sword, no follower save his horse!"

And Gaimar, bellowing unheeded orders till he was hoarse, found that there is no obedience for a bully who has been made ridiculous. With one accord, the freed peasants tossed their weapons in the air, crying at the top of their lungs:

"Fulvia! Fulvia forever!"

ONE man alone held to the service that had made him what he was: Gaimar's Norman captain of the levy swept out his sword and thrust it through the nearest shouting peasant. Before Jaufré could interfere, before Fulvia could cry out, the captain was torn from his horse and his life went out with a score of knife-wounds.

Horrified at the sight, Fulvia could not withdraw her eyes from the savage scene, till the din was pierced by strident shrieks of abject terror. Turning toward the sound, she and all the others saw Gaimar, still dangling by the waist, but now with a noosed rope of twisted bark about his neck. Above him, clinging by his legs to the oak branch, was Gian the One-Handed, the bark rope in his single hand, a sharp knife in his teeth.

Fulvia started forward, her voice frozen in her throat. Making a swift turn of the rope about the branch, Gian shifted the knife to his hand and severed the picket-rope at a single slash. Instantly Gaimar's released weight pulled the noose taut; the tyrant fell till the bark rope jerked; and legs twitching in the death-agony, Gaimar dangled with broken neck.

Gian looked down into Fulvia's face with eyes that gleamed.

"Pardon, my lady," he said simply. "He hangs better so."

Author of "The Exploding Men."

BEING the father of a numerous family, all circus folks, everybody got to calling me "Pop," and to pouring confidences into my ears, or those of my good wife, Millie, long before either of us passed the three-score mark.

Millie is a wardrobe woman, but I am still a clown in spite of my years and my two broken ankles that never properly mended—on account of rheumatism, I suppose. My, how the kiddies do laugh when they see me skid around the hippodrome on those ankles; they think it is all part of the fun and haven't the remotest idea that every step, if the weather happens to be bad, causes me pain. I don't care; my infirmity has made the name of old Pop Tangier a household word, and who would not suffer a little pain for the sake of seeing little children laugh.

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To return to my muttons—how an old man full of memories will run on about himself when once he gets started—many is the family trouble Millie and I have helped to untangle; many the budding love affair we have assisted over the inevitable bumps. About the only performer who never made a confidant of either Millie or old Pop Tangier when trouble came knocking at the gate was Daisy Trevor, and it is about Daisy and how Violet Colina overplayed her hand I am going to tell you.

Perhaps it was because Daisy was not a performer by inheritance that made her so secretive. She was a city miss, New York, her father a famous physician, and she came direct from a woman's gym', where she had been instructor, to the big show; came because she liked the business, because God created in her a born gymnast, and a wonderful one.

My own people, on my mother's side, came down in direct line from Joseph Grimaldi; my father was part French; and Millie is one of the Dockrills with more than a hundred years of circus life behind her family; but, bless your heart, we are neither of us the sort to put on airs on that account, and Daisy Trevor might have saved herself many a sad heartache had she confided in us.

While Daisy, as I said, wasn't from a circus family, there were none could outdo her in daring; that is, until the time I am going to tell you about. And Daisy had brains, not always common where there is great muscle and daring.

We circus folks keep up with the times in most things; but we cling tenaciously to tradition in our business, fighting shy of anything new. Until the last few years you seldom saw a new act with the circus. It was the same old trapeze, bareback, juggling, contortion, tumbling stuff year after year, all done in the traditional way.

We knew well enough that the folks sitting out there on the blues were tiring of it; but we had done those old tricks for so many generations we couldn't believe there were any others to do. Then Daisy Trevor leaped into the show business and became responsible for the first circus with all new acts, or acts that were practically all new; that was Willison's World Gathered Shows.

Maybe that name, Willison, doesn't mean much to you; but it does to us. The Willisons have been riders ever since I can remember, top-liners, always. Perhaps if your circus memory can run back thirty years, you will recollect the old John O'Brien show and their principal rider, Martinho Willison. There was a rider! He wore whiskers—imagine it now, a rider with whiskers!

It was old Martinho's grandson, Bob Willison, started the Willison World Gathered Shows. It was a wagon outfit for two years, playing the turkey towns and barely keeping two jumps ahead of the sheriff. Then came a big year, and the next season it was a thirty-car railroad show. Then Bob Willison met Daisy Trevor. That was the beginning of the circus that turned tradition topsy-turvy.

Millie and I and Daisy were playing with the Barnum Show; we were going to remain South for the better part of the Winter and Bob Willison's circus had closed there. It was at Montgomery, Alabama, I broke my ankles, both of them. I used to clown the leaps in those days; you know, where camels and elephants are lined up on the hippodrome track and the acrobats turn somersaults over them, running down an incline to a springboard, leaping the animals and landing on a thickly-padded cushion. I struck a tent stake in landing, and the next I knew I was in the hospital with broken ankles, a hopeless cripple for life, as I thought then.

Daisy was doing a return trapeze act with the flying Jollisons; a single riding act; and was top mounter with the Marvelous Colinas, lady acrobats. She and Violet Colina got excused from the parade, stopped over in Montgomery and came to see me the next morning in the hospital. They were there when Bob Willison, who had read of my accident in the papers, dropped in. It was the first time Bob and Daisy had met.

Of course Bob didn't do a thing but talk about his next season's plans and how he intended to enlarge to a fifty-car show. He was wildly enthusiastic; but Daisy wasn't. The two of them sat there, one on each side of my bed, and had it back and forth. Blue as I felt, it was cakes and ale to me to hear those youngsters go it.

Daisy advised Bob that, if he was making money, he would do far better to stick to his thirty cars—the Barnum Show had just had a poor season, that was why we were playing South so late; trying to make up—

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jumping the outfit to fifty cars would cost a mint of money and be a tremendous risk. Anyway, she claimed city people weren't falling for circuses the way they did once; it was only the turkey towns that turned out. Break-neck thrillers had boosted city business for a while, but now it was falling off again; they were dog-tired of the old stuff.

Bob Willison was as deeply wedded to tradition as any circus man; but he knew business ability when he saw it, and Daisy fairly bristled with that element. His eyes began to sparkle and he tried to draw her out. Bob is a mighty fine-looking chap, one of the best that ever landed on a rosumback, as we call the riding horses. Perhaps that was why Violet Colina had been openly making eyes at him ever since the three had come into my room.

"That's so," he declared, "they are getting sick of the old stuff; but where can a manager find anything different? Who has got anything new?"

"Who has got anything new?" repeated Daisy with fine indignation.

She was a bit testy at the way Violet was eying Bob, for Violet had a perfectly good husband back with the show.

"Who has got anything new?" said Daisy. "Plenty of people; but can they get a chance to display it? I think not. Just try putting on a new act and see how quickly the big boss will tell you to stick to the old stuff and not take chances while the original goods are going well.

"I'll tell you what," continued Daisy, her cheeks reddening beneath their tan. "Some day a real manager is going to jump into the circus business and get behind an outfit with *all* new acts, none of the mossback, sixteenth-century material at all, and being packed to the ring bank will be such a common affair with that show that the hip' acts won't go on a dozen times in the season. As for finding new acts, I've got a dozen in my head right now."

I was chuckling in spite of my ankles that were beginning to ache because the dope was wearing off. And I could see Bob Willison's handsome mouth trying hard to keep from splitting into a grin. Spirit got him the same as it does every circus man; we live by grit and spirit. No grandson of old Martinho could be a true Willison if he did not fairly worship daring in a woman.

O DAISY, Bob and Violet left the hospital together, and Millie, my wife, who had to finish out her contract with the show, told me what happened afterward. Bob trailed along through the South for a month with the Barnum outfit paying furious court to Daisy, while Violet Colina, in spite of her perfectly good husband, paid furious court to Bob—when nobody was looking.

Violet, coming from an old line circus family herself, had always been jealous of Daisy's success, for all they were good friends enough on the surface, and I think it was that jealousy made her set her cap for Bob. Later, perhaps, she may have been really in love with him, but I thought I knew Bob well enough to feel sure he would have no truck with a married woman, and both Millie and I wished nothing but the best of luck for Daisy.

The Barnum Show closed at Galveston and, a week later, our trade paper brought me two bits of news. Daisy and Bob were married at the last stand, and two days before Violet Colina's husband had been found dead in his section of the sleeper. The paper said an overdose of some sort of sleeping-powder; but I could smell something wrong somewhere and I didn't like it. From her actions that day in the hospital I knew Violet was smitten with Bob Willison, and Daisy had got him. I felt it in my bones that Violet would make trouble yet.

I heard nothing more until the next Spring. Millie and I have a cozy little home near Waukegan, Illinois. One day late in Spring I was sitting out there on the front veranda in a wheel chair. I knew, or thought I knew, that there was to be no more trouping under the white tents for me—my ankles hadn't healed rightly—and Millie would never go out without me, so I was feeling mighty down in the mouth, for the bluebirds were singing and I could just begin to smell that delicious odor of crushed new grass that always clings around a ring bank.

Millie was in the back kitchen putting up rhubarb, feeling even bluer than I did, for the old hankering had got into her heart that morning, too. Suddenly I heard the front gate click. Looking that way, I saw a fine-looking couple start coming up the long walk. It was Daisy and Bob!

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I was so all-fired glad to see them both I left my chair and hobbled down the path before I realized what I was doing; the first time I had walked, too. I couldn't wait another minute. I wanted so badly to get them both by the hand. I saw Daisy's face light up joyfully as she cried:

"It's a scream, Pop, a scream!" Then she turned to Bob as she added, "Didn't I tell you Pop Tangier couldn't possibly be all in yet? Trust Pop to shake out something new for next season."

Bob was grinning, too, and, for just a second, I couldn't realize what at. Then it came over me like a flash; it was my walk had caught them. Handicapped with those two bum ankles, I had to favor myself tremendously in hobbling down the path and it hadn't struck me at the moment as being in the least funny. We show folks, however, can put a good face on most anything, and I guess, when I realized what made 'em laugh, I vamped a little to make that walk still more ridiculous as I finished the distance to Bob and Daisy.

Fifteen minutes later we were all sitting out on the veranda drinking some of Millie's home-made elder-flower wine with it settled that Millie and I were to open the season with the Willison World Gathered Shows. Yes, it was just like that; Daisy never lost any time in disposing of a business matter.

Of course I protested at first that it was impossible, and I guess there were tears in my eyes when I said it, for I could almost hear the old band striking up for the grand entree. But Daisy wouldn't listen, and many is the time since then that I have thanked God she didn't, too.

"Why, that walk of yours has got Charlie Chaplin beat both ways from the start," she declared. "All you need do is keep off the street and nobody will know it's not part of the act."

I don't know if Daisy realized the heartache for the old life that was in Millie and me and took us on out of pure great heartedness, or whether she really believed I would make good. Sometimes I like to think it's one thing, and sometimes the other; I guess I'm only human. Anyway, Daisy was right; that walk brought 'em up standing from my first prance in front of the flags—the dressing-room curtains.

We opened in Tipton, Indiana, and for a month I hardly knew myself, the show was so little like old times. Daisy had certainly made good her boast about having a head full of fresh ideas.

She cut out the old three rings and made it one big, sixty-foot ring with two apron stages, so that everybody in the tent could see the whole show without looking cross-eyed. Perhaps you know that the old three rings and two stages were invented not so much to give you more show for your money—they don't, really—but as an excuse for bigger advertising and a bigger tent.

If you ever landed in a seat away down at the end of the oval you know that about all you could see from there was the end ring. Daisy's scheme of one big ring and two apron stages changed all this and made every seat practically a reserve, as far as seeing all the acts was concerned. And still our tent would hold about as many people as the old long oval.

Daisy went on in three new acts herself. "The Seven Marvelous Madero Sisters, Amazing Mexican Acrobats," was one. You might think this was the old turn, but it wasn't, they didn't do a single trick that had ever been done before; Daisy trained those women to start in where the ground and lofty men left off, and she took Violet Colina into the act.

That made me feel at times as if I was living on a volcano, for I saw Violet still had her cap set for Bob; but it shows just the sort of a fine girl Daisy was. Violet never but once looked me in the eyes after I joined; she thought I held suspicions about that husband of hers and the convenient sleeping-powder.

Daisy's triumph, however, was the Five Floras, a bareback act, all Daisy's idea. There were five girls in it—Daisy, Rose Guerra, Lily Malden, Pansy Rice and Violet Colina—with five horses, all riding double, triple and quadruple in the big ring. Each girl was dressed to represent the flower her first name stood for; festoons of flowers were draped above the ring and the horses were flower-decked.

IT WAS the finale that was the big thing in this act. I never saw but one audience that it didn't bring to their feet cheering like mad—I'll tell you about that one later. For the finish the four other girls left their horses and posed on the ring bank, while Daisy stood in the center and the five horses, alternate blacks

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and white, were speeded up—I mean really speeded up, not just the band playing faster and faster to make you think the horses are racing, when, all the time, they are doing the same old steady lope.

At a signal, a big, mechanical fountain in the middle of the ring began to throw up a perfect storm of colored paper disks representing flower-petals that came down like rain all over the ring, and Daisy sprang from the ground to the back of the lead horse, landing standing, mind you. There she stood, poised gracefully, for just a moment, then she arose in the air and turned a complete backward somersault, landing on the second horse; somersaulted from the second to the third, and so on, three times around the ring, landing on a different horse every time.

All the time those horses were going faster than the oldest performer ever saw a rosum-back go before, the music was playing like mad, everybody around the ring ki-yipping and the audience fairly crazy with enthusiasm. She finished with a double somersault from horse to horse, the first and only woman to turn a double backward somersault on a traveling horse. At the end of the act Daisy just about owned everybody in that big tent—everybody except Violet Colina. Violet, realizing she was only a picture background for Daisy's triumph, used to become fairly green with envy, and if looks could have killed—well, I don't know.

It was a wonderful circus performance clear through, but it had one weak spot; it was too much Daisy; she was the backbone of everything; everything depended on her. Though I doff my chapeau to no one when it comes to giving the ladies their due, you know, and I know, and everybody knows that a woman can not stand up under anything and everything the way a man can. Sooner or later there comes a time when she is forced to realize she is a woman and must either favor herself or break.

It may be a heart affair; it may be an underhand stab of ill luck, or it may be just nothing at all but the dear woman's soul in her, the part we love her most for possessing; but, some time, it gets her.

As I said before, for two months we had nothing but good business; every town was a triumph; the biggest people in the show world were watching us with amazed eyes, envying Bob Willison's fast-fattening bank account. Bob and Daisy seemed both to have forgotten Violet Colina and were as deliriously happy as two turtle doves—until we played East Liverpool, Ohio.

It was there that Rose Saxon fell from the high wire. Daisy was doing an act in the big ring; Rose was finishing her part of the act with the Silver Wire Saxons twenty feet above. Daisy was performing splendidly, but I knew she had one eye on Rose every minute, for the little girl hadn't been feeling well that morning and Daisy knew it. She and Rose were like sisters, having been married on the same day.

Suddenly I heard Daisy utter a half-stifled scream, saw something scarlet shooting through the air and the next moment heard a crunching smash as Rose dropped almost at Daisy's feet. Circus folks are trained to fall properly so that they seldom get hurt; but Rose had probably fainted before she dropped and had been unable to turn and land safe. Please God I may never again see such a look of horror on human countenance as was on Daisy's face when she first glanced down on Rose Saxon's poor bruised form.

Daisy didn't faint, she didn't even stop—we are obliged to finish our acts, no matter what happens—but her face went pale as milk. They took Rose out, and the show went on, but poor Rose was dead.

It was the next day I began to notice the change in Daisy and, more's the pity, another noticed it as well, Vi' Colina. Daisy seemed to have lost her nerve.

She still did all her acts, but she was regularly cutting out that whirlwind finish to her riding turn. We always had a prearranged signal when Daisy was to include the somersaults. She would smile and wave her whip in the air and then clap her hands once toward the band; that was the signal for the horses to speed up, the music to quicken and for the prop men to start the floral fountain.

Being the wife of the owner of the whole outfit, Daisy could, of course, do about as she wished, and, previously, she had sometimes cut that whirlwind somersault finish—it was a tremendous big riding act even without the finale—if she wasn't feeling just right, or if the weather was so hot that the horses sweat much, and it wasn't safe to somersault on their backs; but now she cut it most of the time.

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We were playing in Alliance for three days, six performances, and four times running Daisy not only cut her riding finish, but cut her other acts disgracefully. She and Violet Colina had words about it in the dressing-tent, so my wife Millie told me afterward. Violet made some sneering remark about the yellow streak always being sure to come out sooner or later with a woman who wasn't born to the business.

Daisy made no answer; she kept right on changing for the next turn; she didn't seem so much angry as she did hurt, Millie declared. Anyway, business began to fall off; the people weren't getting what they had expected, and somebody put a flea in Bob's ear. I'm not saying who it was, but I noticed at this time that Violet Colina was hanging around him more than she ought, and I feared for what it meant. There are other ways of killing people beside seeing to it that they take an overdose of sleeping-powder.

On a later afternoon I saw Bob watching Daisy's part in the performance. She had cut nothing so far that day; but I could see the lines around her mouth drawn taut as piano wire and I knew she was keyed up almost to the breaking-point, that she was simply lashing herself to go through to each proper finish.

Violet Colina, having concluded her part in the riding act, was standing on the ring bank near Bob, a sneer wreathing her mouth as she watched Daisy. It was as if she dared Daisy to cut now, both dared her and egged her on to do it.

Daisy cut the finish. Then she took her bows and left the ring, in her handsome eyes the look of a tremendously proud animal that has been beaten and had its spirit completely broken, that knows it is beaten. And in Vi' Colina's eyes the look of jealousy had given place to one of half-triumph.

From that hour Bob seemed to turn against Daisy just like that—the snapping of your finger. Bob had been raised to believe the greatest sin that a person can take into their soul is cowardice. Perhaps you can not easily understand, but when you remember that absolute lack of fear is the one prime essential of every circus act, you should know. And I suppose Violet Colina talked continually into his ear about the yellow streak being bound to show sooner or later if one had it; for now we all saw that she was brazenly trying to win Bob Willison, and what more she was trying to do God only knows; I don't dare think, it's too horrible.

Bob said nothing to Daisy, he just ignored her for the next few days, and Daisy kept dumbly to herself, confiding in nobody, freezing up at the least attempt at conversation from any of her friends.

WE CAME to Detroit, a four-day stand where Bob had set his very heart on making good. At the afternoon show Bob was about the big ring all the time; he was watching Daisy again. The tent was packed, and, for a wonder, Daisy went through her first three acts with all her old accustomed daring and vigor. There was a laugh on her lips, too, but it was a sadly queer little twisted thing I could not understand.

Everything went fine, the audience was with us every minute. When it came to the big riding act, The Five Floras, I could see Bob's face tighten with anxiety. I didn't know at that time, but I do know now, how much Detroit meant to him. The show's success there would be noised through the whole State and the Michigan crops had been plentiful; four big days in Detroit would come mighty near spelling success for the entire season for Willison's World Gathered Shows.

"Pretty Pond Lilies," I can hear the band playing it now—they almost always play that for a riding act, it goes so well with the rosum-back lope—and I can see the set look on Daisy's face, and the obvious sneer on Violet Colina's. Somehow I knew Daisy wouldn't omit that whirlwind finish today, and, somehow, I wished that she would. I actually found myself whispering a prayer that she might. I always clowned her big riding act.

The first part went splendidly. Daisy had the audience right with her; she was riding gloriously, with even more than her old dash.

Then it came time for the finish, with Violet Colina and the other girls posed on the ring bank. I saw Daisy smile toward the reserves, then toward Bob. He didn't smile back. Then she waved her whip and clapped her hands toward the music, the signal for the somersault finish.

The tempo of the music quickened, the five horses, two white and three blacks,

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the colors alternating, all flower bedecked, raced about the big ring. Daisy stood in the center kissing her finger-tips to right and left as she poised for the first leap. She was off—shooting through the air and landing on the back of the leading black, big Nero, as graceful as a bird.

She stood there but a brief second, poised on one foot. Then she gathered herself for the upward spring and the "cramp," as we call the backward twist of a somersault. Up she went in a perfect curve of flight, turned once and landed on the back of Pinkey, the second horse, a white. Her progress through the air was as sweet and true as anything I ever saw in the ring. Again she arose and made her turn, a third perfect somersault—a perfect landing!

By now I was standing on the ring bank yip-yipping like mad and waves of handkerchiefs were fluttering like long white combers on the reserves. Even the band had caught the contagion and they were playing with unwonted enthusiasm. In all her life Daisy had never rode more gloriously. Three complete somersaulting circuits of the big ring she made, and then came a slight pause. Would she do the double. I prayed again to God that she might not. Just then I caught sight of Violet Colina's face; it was a picture of malignant hate.

Daisy looked toward Bob. His jaws were grim. She gave him a reassuring smile, as if to say.

"Bob, dear, I'm going to make good, *for you.*"

Daisy took a perfect backward leap for the double. Just as she made her first turn, I saw Violet Colina deliberately flick the tip of Nero's nose with her hand. It was enough. Nero lost his stride, and that threw all the other horses out. Daisy had cleanly made her second turn, but I saw she must land away forward on Pinkey's neck. She could only fall, fall beneath those thundering, racing hoofs!

In less than a second I was inside the ring. Yes, thank God, I was there, pulling Daisy from underneath those cruelly pounding hoofs that, a mere breath later, would have beat her radiant beauty into a pulp. As it was, she was insensible, and one shoulder was terribly mangled.

She came to her senses ten minutes later in the dressing-tent. Bob was bending over her; he was crying. I saw her reach up one hand and stroke his face fondly as she said:

"I think it's all right, Bob dear. I tried to fall clean and it's only my shoulder is hurt. I don't care so long as——"

She buried her blushing face in the crook of his arm and the rest was a whisper I could not hear. But I knew, I knew, for I saw Bob's eyes open wide with wonder, and then that happy look stole into them that comes only to a man when he first discovers that the woman he loves best in all the world is going to present him with what he probably hopes will be a son.

God! the man had never suspicioned, and neither had we, only Violet Colina. I think Violet guessed when Rose Saxon was killed, for there were two lives lost that day instead of one. Daisy had kept her secret because she realized she was the whole thing with Willison's World Gathered Shows, and she feared Bob, if he knew, would send her home and lose out on the season. It was that, not fear for herself, had made her cut her acts. Yellow! I guess not, not Daisy Trevor.

Bob and I had a quiet little talk that night and Violet Colina left the show at the next stand. I've never seen her since, and I don't want to, either.

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MISTER CASSIDY

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

BY

DAVID DOUGLAS

Author of "Deadlight Grogan."

CASSIDY'S face was very, very dirty. His carroty red hair was powdered with coal-dust. His huge torso was attired only in a red flannel undershirt from which the sleeves had been ripped at the shoulders, revealing powerful arms, tapering to slender wrists, and much freckled below the elbows. One leg of his dungaree overalls was rolled up to the knee; the other was ripped even higher and fluttered in the stiff headwind the *Bristol City* was bucking. Since Cassidy wore no socks the bystanders were afforded an unobstructed view of corded calves that were exactly the same diameter as his neck, which demanded a seventeen-inch collar.

"Steward, Steward," suddenly piped a thin, fretful voice, "have that—that disgraceful object removed immediately."

By a tremendous effort Cassidy repressed his impulse to whirl 'round. His hands tightened their grip on the rail before him. It was the first intimation he had received that there were passengers aboard—and women! He had been thinking of one when the interruption came. For a moment he had forgotten that he was aboard a British tramp steamer which but the night before had poked its dun nose out of Manila Harbor and was now limping through a choppy sea *en route* for Melbourne. He had been playing the memory game and it had carried him back to Battery Place, in New York, where Herself and he had been wont to go, late of an evening, to get a smell of the ocean—they both loved it.

And then into his serious thought had come a fugitive strain—"I wonder who's kissing her now." His cynical amusement anent the vagaries of his imagining had been banished as quickly as it had come by the remembrance that she had sat by his side when he had heard the song. He remembered, too, that in their mutual newfound affection they both had hated the singer's light-hearted raillery of love and faithfulness.

And then, acutely conscious of his appearance—he had come up the fiddley from the boiler-room to the hurricane-deck for a breath of air—he nerved himself to turn and make his way back. He knew exactly the type he would see when he faced 'round. That voice would belong only to an aged and irascible American spinster.

The steward, a slender Cockney weighing probably less than one of Cassidy's capable legs, eyed the fireman apprehensively and plucked nervously at his trembling lower lip while he hesitated for reply.

"Do you hear me, sir," insisted Miss Minerva Wheeler, "have the—the indelicacy removed immediately——"

Cassidy chuckled.

"Indelicacy is good," he muttered.

"Yes, mem, yes, mem," returned the steward, "H'i'll see the capting himmediately, thank you mem. Hi 'ave no hauthority hover the firemen——"

Cassidy turned.

"Look here, you shrimp," he ordered. "You do whatever this old girl tells you, d'ye hear. She's a Townie of mine. If she tells you to dump me overboard, you do it, or by the holy hookumdookum I'll break you into seventeen sections when we get to Melbourne——"

Cassidy answered Miss Minerva's glare with a grin which even the grime of his face could not hide. Before the mockery of his

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widely-set-apart and warm blue eyes her own faded gray ones fell and, shaking with abortive rage, she turned to the occupant of the next deck chair in dumb appeal for assistance.

The girl had been dozing, but she awakened while Cassidy was speaking. From beneath lowered lids her glance flitted from Miss Minerva's face, reading there the spinster's emotion, to Cassidy's. As her eyes met his he stiffened as if he had come into sudden contact with a live electric wire. The blood sprang with a stinging rush up to his head. With almost sickening force he realized the vast contrast between her white immaculateness and his own uncouthness. The white-painted deck-house behind her, the holy-stoned deck beneath her, the light of the morning sun drawing an answering gleaming from the coiled masses of hair, having the golden sheen of corn tassels, under her jaunty yachting cap, the freshness of her white serge suit, all cruelly emphasized the difference between them.

These things he subconsciously sensed while her eyes held, expressionless, to his for barely an instant. And then she smiled mockingly, even as he had regarded the older woman, and her gaze traveled slowly over his bulk in the same sort of admiringly impersonal appraisement she might have given to a statue or a thoroughbred horse. He had seen the same look in the eyes of many other women and he had come to hate it.

"Good morning!"

Even as the sound of the voice reached his ear Cassidy knew that he detested its owner. Sight of the individual confirmed the sudden impression. Lord Porchester stood regarding Cassidy, almost as carelessly as he would a worm, through a monocle which he adjusted after he had addressed his greeting to the women. But in the gaze with which Cassidy surveyed the nobleman's careful sea-going morning attire of blue serge, with the requisite accessories, was so much open hostility and contempt that even as flint draws fire from stone, a spark of venom leaped into Porchester's small gray eyes as he demanded—

"What is this beastly fellow doing here?"

The girl sprang up from her chair, revealing the superb lines of a figure, a little taller than middle height and a little heavier than medium weight, that seemed fairly to glow with vitality, as Cassidy clinched his hands impotently at his sides.

She glanced alternately from one to the other, with many little mischievous devils in her eyes, for a moment.

Unconsciously almost she contrasted Porchester's thin, bowed-shouldered figure, barely as tall as her own, with that of Cassidy and then, in a tone whose clear music brought a tingle of little thrills to Cassidy's spine, she said:

"I really don't know the gentleman. But he seems to be a friend of Aunt Minerva's. I heard him call her 'old girl' and 'Townie.' Perhaps——"

For an astounded moment Miss Minerva was stricken speechless and then, with an indignation that impelled her to her feet, she shrilled:

"How dare you talk so, Mary Spencer—how dare you? Isn't it enough that you drag me 'round the world on your wild-goose chases without subjecting me to insult and humiliation, and the company of—of—half—half—*naked* persons. I—I never saw the creature before. I—" she turned to Porchester—"if you are a gentleman, Lord Porchester, you will get rid of this odious creature immediately——"

Cassidy looked at Porchester and laughed and then he spat expressively over the rail. Words could not have framed insult more exquisitely. Before the nobleman could formulate any expression of the sudden rage which empurpled his thin-featured, sallow face, Cassidy had disappeared into the fiddley and the reverberating sound of his heavy boots on the iron rungs of the ladder leading below attested that he was returning to his duties.

When he had gone, Miss Minerva bowed frigidly to the other two, gathered up her shawl and the copy of Mr. William Dean Howells' latest book on New England life, and stalked with what majesty is possible to a very short, overstout lady, whose rather flat feet were encased in low-heeled common-sense shoes, to the cabin companionway.

ANNOYED at his own loss of temper, Porchester stroked his light, drooping mustache in meditative silence and kept his eyes averted upon the sea. For a moment or two the girl also held silent, a little pucker between her eyebrows, as she wondered, if, after all, an old

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name and a vast estate could make up for the lack of the things a girl has pictured in her dreams as belonging to the man to whom she one day proposes to surrender body, mind and soul. Presently, she shook herself, in impatience of her mood, and laughed lightly, if not joyously.

"My lord," she said, with an ironical little courtesy, "our friend, the American husky, seems to have gotten your goat as well as that of Aunt Minerva."

He knew that she was aware of his antipathy to slang and that she was teasing him. He was also well aware that she was taking this trip around the ragged edges of the world, and allowing him to accompany her, as a sort of testing of him. But in spite of this knowledge he was hard put to it to restrain expression of his irritation and caught his lower lip in his teeth for a moment before he forced a smile and answered in his cold, leisurely tone:

"I'll admit that I was a little upset. I thought the rascal was annoying you." He turned at the sound of footsteps on the deck behind him. "Ah," he went on, "here's Captain Jones. I'll ask him about the fellow."

After the captain, a heavy-set, bewhiskered little red-headed Welshman, had saluted them, Porchester put his query to him.

The captain laughed and turned twinkling eyes on Mary.

"He's a countryman of yours, miss," he said in the thick rich tone often peculiar to the Welsh. "He's an American missionary."

"A missionary!" they both exclaimed.

The captain nodded and smiled.

"Yes. The first time I ever saw him was at Hongkong about six months ago. He was drunk as a lord—" the girl laughed and Porchester scowled, but Owens went on innocent of the possible personal application of his simile—"and he was preaching to about a score of the constabulary. I laughed until I had to sit down on the ground——"

"Oh, come, Skipper," interrupted Porchester impatiently. "You are stringin' us."

"What was he preaching about?" demanded Mary, with twinkling eyes.

"The greatness of Uncle Sam," answered Jones. "It seems a couple of the policemen had tried to arrest him. After he had given them a thrashing, reinforcements kept coming and he dressed them in their turn until he had all the police at that end of town—it was the native part—in a bunch. Then he preached the greatness of Uncle Sam to them, gave a short history of the War of the Revolution and how us Britishers were licked and wound up by making them dance even though their knees had the collywobbles, while he gave an exhibition of firing the twirling pistols he held in his hands, like your Yankee cowboys do. By this time there was an audience of five or six hundred people. To wind up he made the police give three cheers for Uncle Sam and cry to —— with all kings——"

Mary laughed.

"And how did he manage to get away?" she again demanded.

A grin illumined the captain's weather-beaten face.

"I kind of took a liking to the chap," he admitted. "It was dark and we made a run for the harbor where some of my boys were waiting in one of the boats for me——"

Mary clapped a hand on one of the captain's shoulders.

"You're a good sport, Captain," she said, "but where does this Mister——"

"Cassidy," supplied Jones.

"Where does he come from in the States? What took him to Hongkong?"

Jones shrugged his heavy shoulders.

"You know almost as much about him as I do," he replied. "New York he claims as his home, I believe, but he seems to have been kicking about all over the world for years — some trouble back home I guess——"

He was interrupted by a call from Jenkins, the second officer, on the bridge, who wanted to remind him that it was nearing noon and time to take the daily reckoning.

Jenkins followed the captain into the chart-room.

"Some class, that piece of calico, sir! What?"

Jones smiled.

"You'd let her put you in commission as skipper any time, eh? But you'd better keep your thought on Mary Anne or some other of your many Molls in port, son. She's got a little pile of her own and it looks as if, like all the other Yankee girls seem to be, she's crazy about Porchester's titles and castles. He's a millionaire, too,

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so it'd just be a waste of time for you——"

He shrugged his shoulders, picked up his sextant, and turned toward the door.

"Well, what in thunder," demanded the younger man, "makes swells like them take a trip on a rotten old tub like this?"

Again Jones shrugged his shoulders.

"You tell me why any woman does anything, and especially one of those high-strung thoroughbreds like she seems to be, and I'll tell you what my old lady's doing in Cardiff right this minute. But Porchester must love her for herself alone, though. They tell me she's led him a merry chase since they left London six months ago."

FOR a moment it seemed to Cassidy as if the end had come. The *Bristol City* had struck something with a crash that threw him off his feet and then she hung, quivering, down by the stern, while the twin propellers churned madly on.

But in another moment, the engines ceased their sudden racing—from the bridge had come the command "Stop"—and there was what at first seemed a dead silence, barely punctuated by the distant rumble of voices and hurrying feet, on the deck far overhead. With the stoppage of the machinery came also a darkness in which the eight open boiler-doors seemed like the red eyes of greedy omnivorous monsters, hungry for some prey.

As Cassidy got up on to his feet again the *Bristol City* listed suddenly to port and in company with the eight other firemen and trimmers and a motley collection of coal, wheelbarrows, and shovels he slid down into a corner.

Excepting only Phelan and himself, the men were all Lascars. Terror had for the moment deprived them of speech. For days the *Bristol City* had been driving south, having left Borneo astern, against the force of the monsoon, which blew in from the southwest and bore on her starboard bow with such velocity that she had been averaging little more than six knots an hour. Captain Jones, fearing that he might be driven too far in on the poorly charted north Australian coast, was keeping his ship as much into the wind as he thought she could stand; but she was already straining and for over a week now the pumps had been kept going night and day.

It was nearing the end of their watch—almost eight bells—midnight ashore—and the men were exhausted. Cassidy, in charge of the watch, had driven them like dogs for the reason that, for several days now, they had been lethargized by the fear that they would never see port again.

While the men scrambled to extricate themselves, one of the boiler fires began to slide slowly—a white-hot stream of coal—out of its brazen maw. In the same moment, somewhere between the stokehold and the engine-room, a steampipe burst and the hiss of its escape was added to the other ominous sounds which, one by one, were being fused in the volume of chaotic noises. Behind all was the booming diapason of the heavy sea pounding the *Bristol City's* hull under the irresistible urge of the raging wind.

It all happened in much less time than it has taken to tell; and even before Cassidy had determined what to do one of the Lascars screamed frenziedly and scurried, on hands and knees, toward the iron ladder leading upward. Escape down the dark narrow passage to the engine-room had been cut off by the wrecked pipe. The clouds of scalding vapor, which were even now beginning to pour into the stoke-hold, attested that fact.

Phelan, an East Boston Irishman, and huge almost as Cassidy, uttered an oath and sprang toward the ladder.

"It's every man for himself and to hell with the last one," he spat at Cassidy, crouching low in the gloom, and to escape the vapor, beside him.

Cassidy returned no answer. He had not seen Mary in the more than two weeks which had elapsed since the morning of their encounter on the deck; but a vision of her came suddenly into his mind now. He shuddered and his cheek muscles set in ugly ridges as there came also swift realization of their common peril. He visualized, as distinctly and accurately as if it were being enacted before him, the scene upon the deck above. The *Bristol City* carried but four life-boats. There had been no boat-drills. Barring the officers, four petty officers, three engineers, and two stewards, and Phelan and himself, the remainder of the crew were Lascars—thirteen white men to forty-four natives. Under ordinary circumstances the disparity in numbers would not so greatly matter, but now—he gritted his teeth.

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The boats on the starboard side, on account of the list to port, would be out of the question. The boats on the port side, which was also the lee side, could be launched with care, but their handling would be complicated by the wild fear of the Lascars. And he remembered also that the boats had not been overhauled during the six months he had been on board; and probably not for long before that. It was. . . .

He stretched out a hand and tore Phelan, already mounted up three rungs of the ladder, back to the deck again.

"What the ——," began Phelan, with upraised, clenched fists.

"Shut up," growled Cassidy and the grimness of his face, thrust very close to that of the other, emphasized his command.

"Do you remember," he husked, "that there's two American women aboard this packet——"

"Are you bughouse?"

"No, by——, but we must land up on a reef or something and we'll pound to pieces in short order," he hurried. "These Johnnie Bulls 'll have their hands full with the yellow boys. It's up to us to take care of those two women if there's nothing doing with the boats. Do you get me?"

His blazing eyes bored deep into Phelan's soul, down through the layer of selfishness, and reached the faintly flickering man-spark.

Phelan's shoulders straightened a little and he nodded.

"Shoot the dope," he said, "but for God's sake get a move on."

He glanced anxiously up toward the faint gleam of a single star in the small patch of dark sky visible above the grated opening of the fiddley, far overhead.

Cassidy pushed him toward the ladder.

"Let's get on deck," he said. "I'll tell you there."

The Lascars had already made their way, with trembling limbs, after fighting like beasts for place, up the other ladder leading aloft.

MISS MINERVA was engaged in a fitful dreaming that she was taking her morning constitutional along Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, when she was thrown from her berth and into a corner of her stateroom. While she remained in a horrified silence the engines also ceased their droning and then, with the listing of the ship, came a medley of the loose articles of the stateroom to join her. She had lain in the dark, screaming, for some time, when the door opened and first a lighted lantern and then the face of the Cockney steward appeared, even more sickly seeming than ever, in the faint illumination he carried.

Miss Minerva clutched her scanty clothing to her breast.

"How dare you—" she began.

"Cheese hit," retorted the steward in a quavering tone. In the presence of impending death he had forgotten his subservience. "An' shake a leg. The captaing says you've got to us'tle hon deck hand step lively—the ship's being drownded——"

And then, as the *Bristol City* careened suddenly even more to port, he lost his balance on the brass-bound doorstep and went sprawling down upon Miss Minerva. When Mary, who had drawn on her shoes and thrown an ulster over a hurriedly donned underskirt and jacket, appeared the steward was engaged in a struggle to extricate himself in which the now enraged maiden lady was giving a very fair impersonation of a wildcat.

The lantern, fortunately, had not been extinguished. Mary reached down and pulled the steward out of her aunt's clutches and then, seizing such articles of clothing as were most handy, she hurriedly superintended the older woman's dressing.

She had got the now hysterical old woman out into the passageway when Lord Porchester appeared.

"Save us—save us, Lord Porchester," pleaded the spinster.

"I——"

His words were clipped short by the sudden appearance of Cassidy, bulking large in the narrow white-enameled space. Miss Minerva screamed. Cassidy was, indeed, a fearsome sight. The blood trickled down from a wound in his forehead. Cold though it was on deck his coal-dust-dirtied face was streaked with perspiration. He was only partly clothed and much as he was when she had first seen him.

He pushed Porchester unceremoniously behind him and addressed himself to Mary. Afterward she wondered that she had felt no surprise at seeing him. At the time, his coming seemed the perfectly natural and proper thing to happen.

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"One of the boats has gone," he announced, crisply. "They'd got it swung out and the fall ropes in one of the blocks parted —they were rotten. Listen."

He held up a hand and held silent for but a flash of a second. Mary nodded comprehension of the sounds which came to her ears from the deck even over the tumult of the storm—the sound of revolvers spitting death, mayhap; the hoarse and shrill clamor of many voices, the stampings of many feet.

"They'll never get the other boat out," he went on. "The niggers have gone crazy. I've got a raft off over the stern and we'd better hustle aboard of it—there's no telling how long this old box'll last. I'll carry the old dame here. The wind's raising the Old Ned up there." He put a hand to his thick leather belt and loosened it a little: "You come on behind me and hang on to this. You got duds enough?"

Mary nodded understanding both of what he had said and answer to his question.

"Go to it," she ordered as crisply as he had spoken.

Her eyes raised to his, even in the dim light, showed fearlessness. A grin flashed into his face for an instant as he muttered:

"You're all to the mustard," and then, without warning, he took Miss Minerva in his arms and turned toward the companionway.

"Look here! I say—" began Porchester.

"Beat it!" barked Cassidy with such emphasis that Porchester fell back before him. "Go ahead of us and carry the glimmer."

For a moment Miss Minerva half-choked in a supine silence and then she began to cry out and tear at Cassidy's face and breast.

"Put me down, put me down, you filthy brute," she ordered.

Cassidy endured her onslaught until he had gained the open space at the foot of the companionway. There he halted and shook her, half-viciously, before he muttered through clenched teeth:

"Look here, you old spitfire, if you don't quit your —— foolishness, I'll dump you overboard when we get on deck. D'ye hear me?"

He shook her again to emphasize his earnestness before he shifted her on to his right arm and seized the rail with the left hand to help himself upward, for the slippery steps were at a dangerous slant. Whimpering, Miss Minerva subsided into a comparative quiescence.

Because the sounds of conflict still came from the left side Cassidy climbed laboriously to the weather side of the companionway. When he stepped out on the deck Miss Minerva screamed and hid her face on his breast forgetful, for the nonce, of his nakedness and her own hostility.

Cassidy swore softly under his breath. Even though the tilt of the ship to some degree protected them the force of the wind was such that, handicapped by his burden, he had difficulty in breathing and, in the first impact, as he came out of the deckhouse, he was nearly swept off his feet. Only his grip on the rail, which ran at the height of his waist around the house, saved him from falling. With a hoarse oath Porchester slipped and fell and the lantern, extinguished, went rolling from his grasp.

For a short space of time, during which he summoned all his reserve of strength and breathed deeply through his nose, with teeth clenched into his lower lip, Cassidy gazed out at the spumy sea, raging just beyond the bulwarks.

In one moment it rolled up in a mountainous wave, seeming about to overwhelm them and then, miraculously it appeared, it subsided, just short of its mark, into an underswell that carried the *Bristol City* still further up on its perilous perch. From the waters Cassidy's eyes shifted to Mary's face. As their glances locked the girl smiled wanly up at him.

Feeling a queer little sensation of wonder at the confidence he inspired in her, he smiled back, released his hold on the rail, braced his legs, set wide apart, patted the hand of hers gripping his belt, and shouted—

"Let's go!"

Without waiting for her answer he set off, with head and shoulders bowed over his burden, along the slippery deck. In a second or two he had lost all sense of time. It seemed to him that he had struggled and slipped and fought and cursed with lungs and eyes straining and smarting and every muscle aching almost beyond endurance until, with a sob of inexpressible relief, he straightened up after depositing Miss Minerva on the deck, to leeward of the small white house, on the after part of the poop.

Mary's hand still kept its convulsive grip on his belt when he looked down at her again. And in her face, in the dimness, he read what, for the moment, gave him a

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thrill such as he had never before experienced. In her eyes stood hero-worship and an ineffable tenderness, and it was borne in on him that the "Courage! courage!" which had beat in on his chaotic thought in the midst of his struggling had been in reality her spoken encouragement.

"God," cried Phelan, "I thought you was never goin' to show up."

The interruption brought Cassidy back to the need of immediate action. This was reinforced by the appearance of Jenkins, the second officer, with Porchester and Elliott, one of the quartermasters, close behind him.

"The raft!" cried Jenkins.

Cassidy jerked a thumb toward the stern rail.

"We've got it over," he returned. "But what's the matter with the boat?"

"It's gone," replied Jenkins. "The old man sent me below to find out what was keepin' the women. They were gone. When I came back on deck the boat was gone, too." He glanced back apprehensively into the gloom amidships. "But there's a dozen or so of the niggers left——"

Above the screaming of the wind, the smashing of the sea against the *Bristol City's* sides, and the innumerable minor noises of the creaking tackle, came the sound of shrill voices gradually increasing in volume.

"They're comin' aft," said Jenkins, "and they're hell-cats. They——"

Cassidy jerked Miss Minerva unceremoniously up from the deck and thrust her into Jenkins' arms. He put a hand of Elliott's on Mary's arm.

"Get the women on the raft," he ordered. "I'll hold the niggers off, if necessary." He turned and ran forward to the break of the poop his eyes peering this way and that as he went for some weapon.

PHELAN had hauled the raft close in under the lee quarter. The *Bristol City* had sunk so far by the stem that its rail was almost submerged. And it was fortunate for them that this was so. Under ordinary circumstances, in such a sea and wind, they could no more have found a refuge upon the raft than they could upon a cork. And even as it was they were all exhausted when, at length, the last one of them lay stretched upon the frail pontoon-like structure, barely a dozen feet square, to which it was necessary to lash the women and across whose deck the cold, green water swept as it rode each new, oncoming wave.

"Let go!" shouted Jenkins.

His order was directed at Phelan, who crouched with hand upon the painter which he had loosened to a couple of turns around one of the supports of the little platform in the center of the raft. The second officer's sudden panic was induced by the appearance of many struggling forms, barely discernible in the gloom, near the rail.

Mary cried in alarm.

"No, no!" She wrung her hands in futile desperation. "We can't abandon him," she sobbed. "He——"

Jenkins and Elliott fell upon Phelan at the same moment. There was a short, sharp tussle in which the big fireman, taken by surprise, was borne backward. In the next instant it seemed to the girl as if the raft was lifted incredibly far from the black blotch of the *Bristol City*. She turned agonized appealing eyes upon Porchester, but he lay inert, seemingly intent only upon his hold on the raft and then, overwhelmed suddenly by a choking, blinding rush of tears she laid her face down and for the first time gave way to a despair which took no note of what went on around her.

She was roused by a short laugh. Raising her head in an amazement, which at first refused to accept the evidence they afforded, her eyes encountered those of Cassidy, whose head appeared above the edge of the raft. She stretched her hands involuntarily out toward him even as Phelan grasped his arms to help him aboard. There was a smile in Cassidy's eyes as he gasped—

"Danny, my boy, that was some scrap back there if I'd only had more time to enjoy it."

Phelan grunted.

"I believe yer. But take it from me, old scout, it was nothin' to the scrap there will be if this bloody craft we're on ever hits something that'll hold steady for about two minutes. There're three pikers in the immejut vicinity that'll learn what's done to a guy that double-crosses a pal back in God's country."

But a few moments after Cassidy had gained the raft, the faces of them all were turned anxiously in the direction whence

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seemed to come a deeper, more sullen note than that of the roaring wind. And then, as the raft bore down upon the new sound and it became more insistent, Mary turned to Cassidy, sprawling, full length, near to her, and gradually regaining the strength he had expended in his encounter with the Lascars and then the sea.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Breakers," he answered. "We must be nearing some island." Both had to shout to make the other hear.

"Dangerous?" she asked.

He returned no answer in words, but commenced to untie the ropes which bound her to the raft. He next deftly and swiftly fashioned a belt around her waist with an end of one of them and tied the other end to his own belt.

When she realized his purpose and its reason she protested vigorously.

"You must take my aunt," she cried, her mouth held almost to his ear. "If you are to save any one, save her—it is my fault that she is here——"

Without answer, not even appearing to hear her, he bound the older woman to him even as he had Mary.

It is doubtful if she could have heard him now if he had tried to speak. The raft seemed suddenly to have entered into a maelstrom of swirling water, from which flew a churned froth, that nearly blinded them and which held so deafening a din that Mary's hands, without conscious volition, flew to her ears. Cassidy was now upon his knees, with the women drawn closely to him, and an arm about each of them. Miss Minerva whimpered and quivered with a deathly fear. Mary lay against his shoulder, her muscles held taut and tense. She could barely discern his face, but she was conscious that he was peering into the gloom ahead, intent upon some vital, crucial, coming moment.

She looked up, her lips working in mute prayer. But even as the sky was lowering and without a single ray of light so was her heart empty of hope. Her mind, too, seemed void of any acute sensation. She was wondering, dully, if all people so approached death when she seemed to be going forever and forever up, with Cassidy's arm tightening about her, and then, as unexpectedly, the bottom dropped out of everything, it again seemed, and she fell into unconsciousness.

WHEN Mary awoke it appeared, for a space, as if her sight and mind refused to work in cohesion—as if the latter refused to accept the evidence of her senses. She lay on her side with her head pillowed on an arm.

Her luxuriant hair was unbound and partly obscured her vision. As she raised her arm to brush it back she became conscious that her body was sore and her joints stiff, and that the sun was very hot. And then, without changing her posture, she strove to grasp the meaning of the scene before her. The sand upon which she lay continued for several hundred yards before it met an almost quiet sea. And away beyond that came the horizon where the empty-surfaced sea met the bluest sky, unflecked by even the fleeciest of clouds, that she had ever gazed upon. It was demoralizing as if she had awakened suddenly in the dark of a strange room.

The strenuous occurrences of the night before were for the time but elusive memories that lurked, intangible as Summer clouds, in the back of her brain. She covered her eyes with her hand in effort to think connectedly. And then full recollection came with vivid force through the channel of a prosaic sound. A snore shirred its way into her consciousness. She pushed herself into a sitting posture, Cassidy lay stretched out but a few feet away from her. Her eyes, even as they took him in also sighted the wreck of the raft high and dry upon the beach beyond him.

And lying beside Cassidy her face pillowed upon his breast, lay Miss Minerva. It was she who had snored. In spite of the situation a laugh bubbled to Mary's lips. It as quickly died away, however, as her eyes swept the refuge upon which the sea had cast her. Behind her the land rose gradually toward a little eminence, crowned by several acres of palm-trees about whose trunks grew a dense undergrowth. She rested her eyes upon the dark-green foliage for a moment before she sent them forth on another voyage of exploration. On either side of the eminence the shore curved back from her sight and produced the impression that she was upon an island.

Then she felt conscious of an overpowering desire for water. Her tongue seemed overlarge for her mouth and dry as leather. She rose painfully to her feet and began to untie the rope which still bound her to the

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sleeping Cassidy. Her fingers were fumbling at the knot and her eyes were upon his scarred and strong, but unlovely, face, when his eyes opened directly upon her face.

He blinked in bewilderment for a moment and then he smiled and husked—

"Good morning!"

His voice, his slight stirring, roused Miss Minerva. For a moment she lay in her discomposing position while the lethargy of sleep slipped gradually from her mind. With increasing realization of her position came increasing horror of it. And then with a cry, half-mortification, half-anger, she sprang, with surprising agility to her feet. Again laughter came to Mary. It was tragic and yet it was absurd. The spinster could not free herself from the shackles of the conventionalities even though face to face with she knew not what perils and privations.

An answering laugh rose to Cassidy's lips as he too, rose to his feet, but it was followed by a groan which he could not suppress. His left arm hung limply at his side. He strove to raise it but the effort brought the sweat jumping to his forehead. He raised his eyes to Mary's face.

"Broken, I guess," he replied, in answer to the unspoken question mingling with the alarm and sympathy in her glance.

Rendered dumb by her pity and the renewed realization of how much she owed to him she stepped more closely to him and gently examined his bare arm. The forearm was broken and almost hideously swollen. He winced under the light touch of her fingers; and then his eyes wandered to the little forest. He was afraid to voice his wonder. He was suddenly stricken with dread of what they might not find.

Sensing his thought Mary busied herself with the task of untying the ropes which bound him to them. When she succeeded he said—

"I'll be back in a minute," and set off up the hill.

Despite her thirst and the sudden dread that there might be no water, her thought was also intent upon Cassidy's injured arm. Making her aunt stand in front of her she hurriedly took off her underskirt.

"What are you doing?" demanded the astonished spinster as Mary sat down upon the beach and commenced to tear the skirt into strips.

"Making bandages for Mister—er—*his* —" she waved a hand in the direction Cassidy, who had disappeared within the shade of the trees, had taken. It had just occurred to her that if Captain Jones had mentioned the fireman's name, she had forgotten it. "His arm is broken," she went on, "we——"

"What—for *that* creature—" snapped Miss Minerva, "that great ugly beast! Oh!" she wailed, "if only Lord Porchester were here!"

The angry retort, concerning her aunt's ingratitude, that rose to Mary's lips, died away, unspoken. She was stricken with self-reproach that she had, in the wonder of her own safe awakening, for the time forgotten Lord Porchester and her other companions of the raft.

At that moment Cassidy hailed them. From his manner she knew that his search had been successful. With her aunt following she hastened, her hands full of her improvised bandages, to where he stood. When she came up to him, and before she could speak, he turned and led the way further inland. It was a relief to find herself within even the poor shade of the palm-trees whose scanty foliage, growing far up on their giant trunks, did not serve as a very effective barrier against the sun now nearing meridian. The thin coarse grass, however, was cooler than the sun-baked sand in the open—in that journey in from the raft, of which she knew nothing, she had lost her shoes; and great holes gaped in her stockings.

From a small cluster of bushes, unlike any she had ever seen before, gushed a little spring which took its way down the hill on the opposite side to that from which they had approached it. There was room in the little pool from which the stream trickled away, for both her aunt and herself to drink at once. She threw herself face down and drank as she had never done before, and until she had to stop for sheer lack of breath. And then, blushing furiously at thought of her lack of control, she looked up, expecting to see Cassidy, but he was nowhere in sight.

She sprang to her feet and ran out to the edge of the open just fifty feet or so away. When she came to this she was facing north and the beach upon which she had awakened was upon her left hand. The scene she came upon brought her to a sudden wide-eyed halt with hands, still clutching the bandages, at her breasts.

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With Cassidy were three of the other men of the raft. Phelan alone was missing. Nearest to her was Lord Porchester, advancing in her direction. Under each arm he carried a tin box from which the sun's light was reflected in a thousand little dancing rays. Beyond him, on the beach, were several other similar boxes and a wooden one. Near this latter stood Cassidy and close beside him were Elliott and Jenkins. The latter had a bottle in his hand. Elliott stood facing Cassidy.

Mary uttered a little cry, when she observed that he held a long knife in his right hand, and that his attitude was menacing. Their voices came to her ears but faintly. She could not distinguish what they were saying. For a moment or two the men remained without movement and then, even as Jenkins dropped the bottle and started forward toward the fireman, Elliott raised the knife and lunged at him also. There was barely a flash of a second between the scream Mary uttered and that hoarser cry which came from Elliott. Even in the midst of her fear Mary marveled that Cassidy, so big, and injured as he was, could move so quickly and so effectively.

Before Jenkins could reach them Elliott lay upon the sand and Cassidy stood facing Jenkins, checking his advance with the knife he had wrested from the quartermaster. Porchester had put his load down and, without having seen Mary, was hastening back toward the other men. For a moment or two, during which Elliott rose again to his feet, the argument continued and then, having driven the men back some distance before him, Cassidy returned to the wooden box and commenced, one by one, to break the bottles it contained.

Because her almost bare feet made no sound Mary advanced within arm's length of the three men, standing silently watching Cassidy's action with black looks, before they noticed her. Mary now understood the reason for Cassidy's strange-seeming action. The air was pungent with the odor of whisky.

PORCHESTER wheeled 'round at sound of her voice. His slack, open mouth and staring eyes gave abundant evidence of his surprise. Very evidently Cassidy had not apprized him of her safety. He recovered from his surprise and stretched both hands out to her.

"Mary, Mary," he cried. "This—why where did you come from?"

She barely touched one of his hands with her finger-tips. Both his breath and his eyes gave evidence that he had drank of the whisky. Her look and tone were both very cold as she answered—

"I don't think this island we have come upon is so large that you couldn't have found me if you had been very anxious about me——"

"I—we—" he began.

She waved him into silence and passed on to where Cassidy, his task completed, stood regarding them.

His eyes softened as they fell from her face and its silent greeting and commendation to the bandages.

"Come up to the spring," she ordered, almost bruskly. "That arm of yours needs attending to." She touched the whisky case with a foot. "The lid of this will be just the thing to make splints out of." Her glance fell on the sailor's strong sheath-knife Cassidy still held in his hand. "Give one of the men that knife," she directed, "and I'll show him how to cut them."

Cassidy shook his head with a grim smile on his lips.

"No," he replied. "Mister knife's the only weapon, so far as I know, on this island; and I'm going to hang on to it."

She regarded him with a little pucker between her brows for a while and then, with a short little laugh, she took the knife from him and commenced clumsily to whittle two pieces of the cover he ripped off for her.

It was late in the afternoon when Cassidy returned to the others. He had left them to make a tour of investigation of the island soon after Mary had bandaged his arm. He found the men, with two of the six biscuit tins opened, engaged in eating. Miss Minerva was also alternately nibbling one of the captain's biscuits the tins contained, and sobbing incoherent complaint. Mary sat a little apart, elbows on her knees, and chin cupped in her hands, looking out over the sea and gloomily wondering at its many moods. She had just been thinking that it seemed impossible that the almost smooth surface, gleaming an orange-red under the rays of the dying sun, could really be the same raging monster which had played such havoc with them.

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The other men had also been exploring the island during the afternoon. They had reported that, beyond themselves, it contained not a single living thing. Neither was there anything growing upon it which could contribute to their sustenance. Furthermore, Jenkins had expressed the opinion that the island, if not uncharted, was at least far out of the usual steamship and trading schooner courses—the chance of their rescue was very slim indeed. Borneo and its adjacent islands must lay far to the north of them and Australia far to the east.

Jenkins, alone of the men, returned answer to Cassidy's greeting. And his return was merely a growl. Mary looked up, smiled faintly, waved a hand to one of the biscuit tins and, in a feeble little attempt to lighten the situation, said—

"Last call for supper in the dining-car."

Cassidy smiled answer and shook his head. Her eyes fell to the arm bandaged and held across his chest and then flashed back to his in silent inquiry. But even though it tortured him fiendishly he smiled grimly in answer and in effort to reassure her. Then he sat down and considered the lowering faces of the other men before he began:

"This island, as you have probably discovered, is uninhabited and without anything at all that we can eat. And we may as well face right now the fact that we're up against it—hard. That being the case we've got to go slow on the grub. Can you beat it?" He turned to Mary. "Somewhere, out there," he waved his hand seaward, "and not far away, is the *Bristol City;* and all that she's thrown up is us and the wreck of the raft, a few tins of biscuits, and a case of whisky. How——"

He broke off abruptly and stared out toward the setting sun.

Presently he shook himself, as if to throw off his dejection, and rose to his feet.

"What I was getting at," he went on, looking down at Porchester, "was that we're going on short rations immediately and that I'll smash the face of any fellow that I see wasting the grub like that."

With the toe of a boot he touched a piece of one of the biscuits lying on the ground.

Porchester carefully adjusted his monocle and looked up at Cassidy with what he conceived to be a crushing glance.

"Look here, my good man," he drawled. "When we want your advice we'll ask for it. Until the happening of such a remote possibility you had better leave the direction of affairs in the hands of your superiors."

For a long moment the glance of the two men held locked while the others held silent. Mary's hands fell to her knees and she clasped her fingers around them, and waited, tensely, realizing that this was a crucial moment. Then Jenkins laughed, raucously, and Miss Minerva sniffed, in token of her contempt for Cassidy. Suddenly Cassidy stooped, grasped the nobleman by the nose, and jerked him up on to his feet. Stupefied, offering no resistance, cowed by the pain and anger-induced blaze in Cassidy's eyes, Porchester stood motionless while the fireman husked:

"Advice, you—you —— jellyfish, you, when you hear anything from me you'll hear orders—just let that percolate into your understanding." He released Porchester and pushed him away from him.

For an awful moment the nobleman stood with fists impotently clenched at his side the manhood in him battling desperately with his fear of the huge, ragged and, for the moment, entirely primitive man before him.

His eyes then fell from Cassidy's and traversed the little circle of straining faces, until they came, furtively, to the face of Mary. But she had hidden her face in her hands and sat quivering and burning with shame for both the man and for herself, because at one time she had thought she cared for him.

The tension was broken by Miss Minerva who got clumsily up on her feet.

"You brute, you brute," she spat, "to treat a gentleman so. I'll give you to understand, sir," she shook both her pudgy fists at Cassidy, "that I'm not afraid of you. I——"

"If he only didn't have that knife," muttered Jenkins, "I'd——"

"You'd what?" demanded Cassidy, with eyes on the figure of Porchester, retreating with stumbling, rage-hampered footsteps, to the woods. "You'd what?" repeated Cassidy, turning his gaze upon the sailor.

Jenkins vouchsafed no answer. His look was evil as he got up to follow Porchester.

Cassidy laughed in a way that made Mary shudder. Then he stepped to her side and asked, in a tone suddenly become very gentle—

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"Can you pray?"

"Pray!" she exclaimed looking up in astonishment.

He nodded his head.

"Why—I—" she faltered. "I haven't for a long time—not as much as I ought to. I—why do you ask?"

His eyes beckoned to her as he turned away. She rose and followed him. He went down the beach to where the whisky case still lay. From it he took a couple of the pieces forming the sides and then he asked—

"Are you very tired?"

"No, not very—why do you ask?"

"You'll see presently," he replied, enigmatically, as he led the way toward the southern end of the island.

THEY walked for a long time in silence. The moon, storm-obscured on the preceding night, came out in its full glory soon after the retirement of the sun. As during the day the sky was clearer than any Mary had ever seen before. It was full of stars that seemed to twinkle in cold, mocking glee at their plight. Cassidy had discarded his heavy boots. The only sound, as they strode rapidly along the beach, was the *lap-lap* of the waves near upon their right hand.

Presently Mary lost sense of past or future. She was succumbing to a half-somnolent lethargy, in which all movement and thought were mechanical, when Cassidy wheeled sharply to his left and halted beside a little cluster of undergrowth which had jutted out from the trees. Within the little patch of black shadow the bushes threw upon the sand lay an inert figure. Drawing near, and even as she peered down at the face, Mary recognized the body as that of Phelan.

For a while she stood, speechless, looking at the face, dissipation-battered even before the breakers and the reefs had wrought their mischief on it. But, withal, death had brought a sort of dignity with it and the glazed eyes, which lay open and staring straight upward, held a curious intangible peacefulness in them. Mary, trying desperately to analyze her thought, was conscious that she could not, somehow, feel sorry for Phelan. Cassidy had been speaking for some time when her senses commenced to garner his words.

"From God's country, too. If it hadn't been for him I couldn't have got the raft over. And I couldn't bear to put him away without a prayer—or something. Seemed too much like sticking a dog in a hole."

He knelt down beside the body and pointed to the chest from which a coarse shirt fell away. On it, held by a coarse cord looped around the neck, lay a little canvas bag. Cassidy laid the tip of a big forefinger upon the bag and then he raised the head that he might take it away.

"I left it for you to take off," he said, simply.

Shuddering a little at the feel of the cold flesh, even as she considered the delicacy of his thought, Mary did as he had suggested. She turned the roughly made little receptacle over and over in her hand before he spoke again.

"Open it," he said.

Reluctantly, she unfastened the string tied around the top of the bag and then shook its contents out upon her hand. There were a little lock of brown hair, tied into a loop, with a bit of faded blue ribbon; a small kodak picture, enfolded in a piece of newspaper, and a rusty thimble. The tears were gathering in her eyes as she turned over in her hand the tiny picture of an old woman, seated on a chair in a corner of some far-away garden, and caught sight of some writing scrawled evidently by a trembling hand. She read:

> To Danny Boy from his old mother, took on her 50th birthday.

Still holding the little picture tenderly in her hand Mary fell, face down upon the sand, and cried the tears which had been gathering, in her, seeking outlet, during all the hours since disaster had come to the *Bristol City*.

When her tears had come to an end she raised her head. Near by, Cassidy, unable to check the groan of pain that now and then forced its way through his clenched teeth, was laboriously scraping a hole in the soft sand with one of the pieces of board he had brought with him. Reverently, Mary returned the little keepsakes to the canvas bag and put it in a pocket of her ulster. Then she rose, took off the ulster, laid it down, found the other piece of the box, and commenced, under Cassidy's direction, to help him fashion the last resting-place of Daniel Phelan.

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It was a long task, and a hard one. Cassidy's whole body seemed one great throb of pain when he at last threw his poor shovel aside and stepped out of the shallow hole. Mary's hands were blistered and bleeding and her torn and scanty clothing, perspiration-soaked, clung to her weary body. Incongruously, as thought most frequently does come, came the desire for a bath in a porcelain tub. And then she helped Cassidy to lay the body in its grave. That done he looked at her expectantly. After a very slight hesitation she kneeled down on the sand. Cassidy did the same on the opposite side of the body. At first Mary's lips moved, wordlessly, striving to formulate the sentiment which had now taken possession of her. At last she said:

"Dear God, please be good to Danny Phelan's mother's boy. Whatever he did in life he died right and bravely at the end." Her chin sank down on her breast, "Please God help us, for Christ's sake; Amen."

"Amen!" whispered Cassidy.

They remained silent thus, each busy with thought and perhaps other prayers for a space during which the waves murmured requiem and then, with a long sigh, Cassidy arose and commenced to push the sand in upon the big body.

When they at last stood upright, with task completed, Mary extended her right hand.

"I haven't thanked you yet," she said, softly, "for all you have done for me. You——"

Cassidy released her hand.

"Forget it!" he said curtly.

He felt himself dangerously near a breakdown.

She stood looking silently at him for a moment or two before she said—

"And I don't even know your name."

"Michael Cassidy."

"Michael," she repeated. "Michael. It would be hard to say that name harshly, wouldn't it?"

Cassidy stirred uneasily.

"Plenty have tried," he averred.

She laid a hand on his uninjured arm.

"Michael Cassidy," she said, "I wonder what makes a man of your wonderful possibilities what you are—why you are so far from home?"

With true human illogicality, it did not occur to her that he might be entertaining a similar wondering concerning herself.

"I'm a rough-neck and not worth botherin' about," he blurted, with moody eyes turned out upon the sea. "And I'm out here because—well, a girl had sense and I was a fool. It's time we were going, I guess. I've found a little cave in the sandstone near where we came ashore that'll serve as a bedroom for you and your angel aunt."

Mary picked up her ulster and turned her face toward the direction whence they had come. She felt suddenly very, very tired. And she wanted to be alone. They spoke no more until they had come to the mouth of the little shelter Cassidy had found and then they exchanged only—

"Good night!"

WHEN the derelicts, sad-eyed and drawn-faced, the inroads of their sleeplessness and despairing thought pitilessly revealed by the bright sunlight, appeared the next morning, they found that their store of biscuits had disappeared. While the men, after exchanging a bare greeting with the women, were discussing this in low tones, Cassidy appeared. To each he gave two of the biscuits.

"You'll all get one more at noon and two more tonight," he announced, grimly. "That'll be the daily allowance."

In the days which followed, seemingly interminable in their length, there was little intercourse among the members of the strangely assorted little group. Since his last encounter with Cassidy, Porchester had avoided Mary. Try as she would she could not keep the contempt she felt for him out of her eyes. With the other men she had nothing in common and so, while the three —Porchester, Elliott and Jenkins—hung for the most part together, Mary spent much of her time wandering aimlessly about the little island, ever straining her eyes, hopelessly, out toward the blue haze of the horizon from whence must come rescue, if any. Miss Minerva had relapsed into an almost comatose condition. It seemed as if she had exhausted her power of querulous complaint and she sat, for the most part, staring out in front of her without sound from ever-moving flaccid lips.

Excepting only upon the occasions when he asked her to help him to dress his arm Cassidy avoided Mary and kept out of sight, but she sensed that he was never far away and that he kept strict watch upon

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the other men, who made no secret of their hostility toward him. Frequently, in her uneasy slumbering, Mary dreamed that they had crept upon him and murdered him with the knife while he slept. So powerful an impression did these dreamings make upon her that she warned him one day. He laughed mirthlessly as he assured her that both the store of food and himself were safe from the others.

"You've noticed," he added, "that I don't let more than one of them come near me at a time?"

She nodded.

"Then don't worry about me," he said, "there's enough—" He broke off and walked away.

One morning, at the time he usually handed out the rations, he gave Miss Minerva and Mary their biscuits and then, walking some distance away, he drew a line with his toe on the sand and motioned to the other men to approach.

"But don't come across that line," he warned as they came toward him and he stepped back a few paces.

Mary rose to her feet, expectant of she knew not what.

Cassidy took his knife from the sheath in his belt before he began:

"Last night I figured up the rations. The way we're going now I reckon we can all keep on eating as we are now for about four or five days, and then—" He shrugged his shoulders and waited for a moment before he continued, "on the other hand, if, say, only two were to keep on eating—why——"

Again he shrugged his shoulders.

The three men looked at one another with abject fear and horror of the prospect he had conjured up in their eyes. With the optimistic hope which alone keeps men in desperate circumstances from losing their reason they had continued to believe in the possibility that before their slender store of food should be exhausted their rescue would be effected. Porchester was hugging the belief that when the *Bristol City* failed to make her appearance in Melbourne his friends and agents would institute a search for him. He had refused to consider the slim possibilities of such a searching, even if it were inaugurated.

"Well," at length demanded Cassidy, his eyes on Porchester's face, "what d'ye say?"

An inarticulate growl was all the answer he received. Jenkins snarled, clenched his fists, and took a step forward. Elliott seemed about to spring forward also.

Cassidy braced himself and held the knife ready for action.

"So help me God," he said, "if any one of you tries to touch me I'll cut his heart out."

Mary ran across the line, hands outstretched in reenforcement of the entreaty which shone in her eyes.

"No, no," she cried. "We'll all stand or fall together—share and share alike—to the end. Why, why——"

Her hands clutched at her breasts and her eyes dilated with horror of the situation the iron resolution she saw in his eyes told her was imminent.

"Oh," she moaned, overwhelmingly conscious of the futility of her protest, "it—it will be murder."

Cassidy seemed attacked with a sudden vertigo. He staggered for a moment and then raised an agonized face to the sky.

"God is my judge," he murmured. "I'm doing what I think is for the right and best——"

"Do you mean," Porchester had found his voice, but it was only a pitiable, trembling travesty of what it had been, "that you're not going to give us men any biscuits at all?"

Cassidy bowed his head.

For a long moment, that seemed to hold the agony of all the ages, Porchester gazed at Cassidy's white, set face and then he threw his hands upward in pitifully helpless appeal and cried—

"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

The memory of his selfishness and cowardice slipped from Mary's mind. For the moment she remembered only that he was the man whom she had expected to marry and that he was in dire distress. She turned to him, pity in her eyes, her hands extended to him. But he did not see her gesture. Utterly broken in spirit he staggered away a few paces and threw himself face down upon the sand.

"You liar! You thief. You intend to starve the men to death, and then us, and keep the food for yourself."

Much brooding upon her dislike for Cassidy had turned Miss Minerva's feeling into a hate bitter as gall. For the moment, standing regarding him with convulsively

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working features and hands, she appeared like some old fury. Cassidy shuddered as he looked at her, but he attempted no reply.

Mary turned and laid a hand on his arm.

"Very well," she said, firmly, through white lips. "You can just give the biscuits to my aunt. I will not eat if the others do not I—it would choke me."

Cassidy looked sadly down at her and shook his head. His eyes were steady and his voice firm as he replied:

"If you will not eat, then your aunt will not." He put his hand to his heart. "I don't know how or why but something tells me that you will be saved, but the rest of us—" He choked a little and gestured hopelessly.

Mary shrank back from him with a little cry in the realization that he meant to follow his determination to the bitter end. And then, with bowed shoulders and lagging steps, she turned away. For the first time her courage wavered and she was tempted to seek peace out there beneath the smiling surface of the placid sea.

The next day Elliott disappeared. Cassidy alone could have told how. He had seen the quartermaster stumbling doggedly out to sea. For a moment he had watched, fighting down his desire to call the man back, and then he ran into the shade of the woods and threw himself down and sobbed as only a strong man can.

Through the following days Mary lived as if in the maze of a dreadful dream. For the most part she remained hidden in the little cave. It tore her heart to shreds to look upon the men whom she knew to be slowly starving to death. Several times she rebelled against eating, but Cassidy was adamant in his determination that if she did not her aunt would not. At other times she had tried to save pieces of the biscuit he insisted she should eat in his presence, but he saw through her little subterfuges.

"Why try to prolong their agony?" he once dryly asked her. "They have to die anyway. If I were in their place I'd end it sharp. The sea is kind—drowning is an easy death, they say."

AS THE days passed Mary began to look for signs of weakness in him, but he seemed to be made of iron. His features became gaunt, his huge frame a little bowed, and his eyes burned feverishly, but that was all.

And then Miss Minerva began to whisper that Cassidy was not starving himself, that he was eating even as they were—perhaps more.

"How else could he keep up?" she demanded.

In spite of herself, because she had nothing else to think of, Mary found her mind dwelling upon such a sinister possibility. Time passed on and he still seemed to have retained much of his strength. The suspicion came to have more weight and it insensibly colored her manner toward him. Cassidy suspected her thought and it added to the almost intolerable bitterness of his trial.

On the fifth day Mary determined to watch him. When he stumbled away she followed him at a distance. Within the woods she lost him. She searched for hours until she found him in a cunningly devised shelter between a boulder and a clump of bushes at one end of which he had rolled a pile of rocks.

Afterward she thanked God that she had been prompted to persist in her effort. He lay sleeping when she looked in on him. All thought that he had deceived her vanished when she saw what the abandonment of sleep displayed. His suffering, his utter exhaustion, were entirely revealed in the deep lines of his face and the relaxation of his almost naked body. She had turned to step softly away, with brimming eyes, tempted almost beyond endurance to throw herself down beside him and caress him, when his muttering arrested her.

"Kitty, Kitty," he repeated, over and over again.

A strangling sob rose to her lips. In that moment came absolute self-revealment. Coarse, dissipated, far beneath her own station in life—a rough-neck as he had called himself—all these things he might be but she loved him, in spite of them, because he was a man. And to the agony of this supreme awakening was added the knowledge that his thought and his love were bestowed upon another woman. Truly, she was drinking the hemlock cup of life to its very dregs.

Cassidy awakened early on the next morning in the grip of a fever that seemed to have drained the last vestige of his strength from him. His arm, too, throbbed with intense pain. His first thought was for the women. He remembered that he

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had failed to take them their evening rations. Cursing his own weakness he essayed to get up to his feet. He got only so far as his knees and then he sank to the ground again. Many times he made the attempt, growing weaker with each until, at last, with a groan he fell back and resigned himself to the inevitable. It was the end. He did not mind that so much. He had expected to die. But he had hoped to outlast the other men; and he had wanted to place the remainder of the food in the hands of the women before he passed over. What if they could not find him and the food! The thought tortured him so that he groaned again.

His agony would have been intensified had he known that the sound of his struggling had reached the ears of Jenkins and Porchester, who still retained strength enough to stagger feebly about. He was conscious that they had been trailing him furtively ever since the day on which he had cut off their food-supply, but he had made such wide detours to reach his cache, and both seemed in so much weaker condition than himself, that he had not greatly feared their effort. He had also underestimated the inroads his broken arm, healing very slowly, had made upon his strength.

Porchester and Jenkins had discovered him just before he awakened. It was only because they so greatly feared him that they had refrained from an attempt upon his life. It is probable that, under ordinary circumstances, the two sailors would have been friendly to Cassidy, but they had been swayed by Porchester's animosity in the beginning and they were also of that class in which it is inbred to bow the knee to the nobility. And since Porchester had persistently maintained that Cassidy was not sharing their starvation, they had come to look upon him as a fiend in human form. It was only because of the seeming hopelessness of overcoming him that Elliott had so early lost courage and chosen the quicker and easier death.

The two men were debating the possibility of overpowering Cassidy when his ineffectual striving and groaning gave them knowledge of his weakness. The thought of food spurred them to desperation and kindled a spark of transient strength and courage within them, but both feared to come within arm's length of the fireman.

It was Porchester's craftier mind which suggested the mode of attack. Upon the top of the big boulder beside which Cassidy lay were many smaller ones. It would be possible, by great exertion of their scanty store of power, to push these down upon him and kill him or at least imprison him beneath their weight.

While Cassidy lay groaning, in realization of his utter helplessness, the two made their way to the rear of the boulder. Although its top stood barely nine feet above the level of the ground they were well-nigh exhausted when they had both managed to scale it. Well to the edge of the boulder lay a large, almost flat, piece of sandstone. Peering cautiously down upon Cassidy, Porchester judged that if they could but manage to push it over it would fall upon his head and the upper part of his body. They decided to wait for a few moments in which to summon all their scanty reserves of energy and then to make one supreme effort. If this failed there were many smaller stones with which they could put an end to Cassidy.

THE scanty ration Cassidy had doled out had been sufficient to maintain life, but the pangs of an ever-present hunger had continually possessed Miss Minerva. And so, when Cassidy failed to appear in the evening, and again at the usual time in the morning, she succumbed to a dumb despair in which she was bereft of her querulousness. She had been visualizing death during many days now and had gradually given up hope of rescue. Inherently religious, her thought had turned, perforce, to the future life. And this feeling had warred with her bitterness against Cassidy. In spite of her will and her determination to think only the worst of him, in spite of his rough treatment of her, he had yet served her as few men of his type—or, indeed, any other—would or could have done.

When the sun stood high in the sky Mary determined to go to Cassidy. She had waited, hoping that his night's rest might have revived him. To seek him would reveal that she had spied upon him and distrusted him. But when at last it seemed certain that he must be unable to come to them she rose to her feet.

"I'm going to Mr. Cassidy," she said.

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Her aunt regarded her dully for a moment and then she arose also.

"You know where he is?"

Mary nodded.

"Yes," she answered, with quivering lips, "and I'm afraid he is dying."

She was possessed suddenly with an overwhelming craving for love and sympathy. Weeping, she threw her arms about the older woman and laid her head down on her shoulder.

"Aunty, aunty," she sobbed, "forgive me! Forgive me! All this is all my fault. If it had not been for my folly, my wildness, neither you nor Mr. Cassidy, nor any of the others would have been here. And now he is dying for my sake—for our sake —and you have been so unjust to him——"

Something broke in Miss Minerva and through it came the good that lay dormant in her—as in every other human soul. She patted Mary's back gently with her hands, seeking in vain for words of comfort and losing sight of her own spleen and trouble in the thought of the troubles of others.

Presently Mary raised her face and drew back from her aunt's embrace.

"Come," she said, "let us go to him."

"Mary," Miss Minerva said, gently, "I believe you love this, this man—this rough fireman——"

The girl turned her face toward the sea and stood, with hands clasped before her, for a long time, before she answered, quietly:

"Yes—I do. He is the biggest—the only *real* man I think I have ever known."

"But," continued Miss Minerva, "you couldn't love him anywhere else but on a place like this. It's only because of the things he has done for—for us. In civilization he would be impossible—his—his——"

She made an indescribable gesture.

For a moment or two Mary's face was transformed and her eyes shone as if she were gazing upon some wonderful picture.

"No," she answered, slowly, a thrill in her voice, "he would be possible anywhere. I could make a marvelous man out of him if—" The light died out of her eyes, and the life from her voice, and her face gloomed as she ended, almost inaudibly— "But he loves another woman."

And then, before Miss Minerva could utter any of the words of pity which rushed to her lips, she added—

"And he is dying—come."

Silently, hand in hand, and surely a strange sight for the angels, their clothing torn and ragged and stained, and their hair hanging loosely about their haggard faces, the two American women, reared in luxury, made their way slowly to where Cassidy lay.

They had come within a short distance of his hiding-place when, suddenly, Mary halted and released her aunt's hand, a faint, gurgling cry of unutterable horror on her lips. Astonished, Miss Minerva looked up into Mary's face. The girl's eyes were staring straight ahead. For an instant her expression was such that Miss Minerva feared that she had become suddenly insane. And then, with a cry that was almost a snarl, Mary sprang forward and Miss Minerva saw what had produced her agitation.

But not until she had followed Mary and stood looking down at Cassidy, lying unconscious of the happenings about him, did she understand. A second or two more and the rock the two men had been pushing slowly to the edge of the boulder would have sent Cassidy forever beyond human aid. So intent had Porchester and Jenkins been upon their purpose that Mary's cry had been their first intimation of the approach of witnesses of their evil intent. At sight of the women they were stricken with fear and robbed of their determination. Porchester crouched back before the accusing blaze of Mary's eyes and Jenkins, cowering away also, slipped and fell from the boulder to the ground where he lay trembling and groveling.

When Miss Minerva found her way back from the spring with the rude cup that he had once fashioned for them full of water, Mary held Cassidy's head upon her breast. They managed to force some of the water between his fever-cracked lips and then, presently, his eyelids fluttered and lay open. He gazed straight up into Mary's eyes, uncomprehendingly for a space, and then, slowly, as the gray of dawn fades before the rising sun, understanding came to his eyes and, behind it, a light that made Mary's heart leap convulsively in her bosom and, for an agonizing moment, seem to cease its beating.

Her hands came to his cheeks in a caress of infinite tenderness.

"My dear, my dear," she whispered.

Unashamed, her eyes revealed her soul. His hand groped feebly in effort to reach

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her face. They had passed beyond the need of words. She laid her face down against his.

"I love you—I love you," he whispered, so feebly that she could barely catch the words. "I—I thought that I—cared for another girl—but now I know—" His fingers gripped a hand of hers. He went on again: "The biscuits are—under the rocks. You will—be saved. Something tells me that. But it's better that I should go. I—I—couldn't make you happy—just a rough-neck——"

For the flash of a second his eyes flamed with a light of a great longing and then the lids fell over them and a great, strangling sigh escaped him.

Mary raised agonized eyes up to the little patch of sky visible between the foliage of the palms overhead. Her lips quivered wordlessly in prayer. Miss Minerva, her features working convulsively beyond her control, fell to her knees beside them. She bent her head and laid her lips on Cassidy's rough hand.

"*Mister* Cassidy, Mister Cassidy," she murmured, almost incoherently, "forgive me—forgive me! I've been a wicked old woman—I hated myself because I wanted to like you and you seemed so coarse and rough. But now I know you're the finest gentleman I've ever known——"

She burst into a pitiful, racking sobbing.

Cassidy's lips seemed, for an instant, to carry a faint smile. With a last spasmodic effort of his once mighty strength he turned his face to Mary's breast. The old woman, reading the girl's desire in her eyes, rose and staggered out through the fringe of undergrowth to the beach. For a moment she stared seaward with unbelieving eyes and then she ran forward with outstretched hands, a glad cry on her lips.

A mile or so out to sea a small steamer lay at anchor. A boat was grounded upon the beach. At sight of her one of the group of men advancing toward her uttered a ringing shout, threw his hat upon the ground, ran forward and took her into his arms. It was Captain Jones.

"Thank God, thank God!" he cried, the tears trickling down over his bronzed cheeks. "I'll be able to look my old woman in the eyes again. The boat was forced away and me into it while I was waiting for you—we were picked up two days after. I've made them search——"

But Miss Minerva, excited beyond the possibility of speech, was dragging him toward the boulder behind which lay Cassidy.

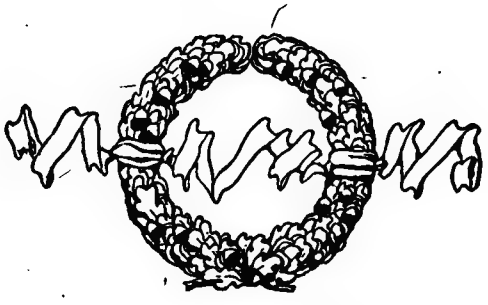
When they came upon the two, Mary raised her face, white as driven snow. For a little while she stared up at them and then she hugged her dead more closely to her with a little moan that cut deep into the captain's heart. He sank down upon his knees beside them.

MORE than a year later another steamer anchored off the little island. When it steamed away a tall shaft of pure white marble stood beside the boulder and just within the shade of the giant palms.

On its base was this inscription.

To the Memory of
MICHAEL CASSIDY
Who died because of his great heart.

And there, far away from the haunts of men, with the waves forever sounding a lonesome requiem, lies all that is left of *Mister* Cassidy, rough-neck, ennobled in the memory of all who knew him by the manner of his death.



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THE CAMP-FIRE

A MEETING-PLACE for READERS WRITERS AND ADVENTURERS

NOT so long ago I blew my own horn by saying that since our Camp-Fire had started I had not yet slipped up by printing a letter that the writer didn't wish published. I've got my just deserts for boasting, for I've gone and done it. Luckily Mr. Sargent had no serious objections, but he had not written for publication the letter I gave you about part of his journey in, through and around South America. He had not, of course, asked me not to print it, but he had not told me I might.

My apologies to him. He's already written me that "it's all O. K., but I wish you would say something in the Camp-Fire to the effect that I was not writing for publication. However, since the letter was printed, I wish you would say this much about the Inca Highway, as I do not wish to create a false impression." And then he gives us the following very interesting talk. He is writing from Peru.

Incidentally we have here again another example of the amazing running-power of Indians, which has been a subject of Camp-Fire discussion.

La Fundicion, Peru.

From Concepcion, Chile, to Quito, the Incas built roads that were fit to take their place among the wonders of the world. The main highways were from Cuzco, Peru, to Quito, Ecuador. There were two roads, the main highway over the mountains and the coast road which led through the valleys of the Chimu and other races and peoples conquered by the Incas. When a new conquest was made, a road was built so that the Inca could travel over it and visit his new domains. A thing which comparatively few people know is that, the ruler alone was the Rey Inca and the members of the royal house Incas. The great mass of the people were merely known by their tribal names.

FROM the river Maule in Chile, we find traces of the road, and it was over these pieces of road that my brother and I hiked. At times we would lose it for scores of kilometros, and then we would pick it up and follow it for many miles. It was about (in places) thirty feet wide, and mostly paved. All showed traces, except in certain parts of the desert, of paving.

Inasmuch as this is about the road, I will quote from my note-book:

At times the road was in perfect condition, and served as the *camino real* for the Indians of the present; then it would pass out of sight for hundreds of kilometros, only to "bob up" in the most unexpected places. Where it crossed swamps, huge blocks of sandstone were laid down; and the streams were spanned by all sorts of bridges. These and the causeways were made of huge monoliths, in many places. Many of these bridges especially in the far-out-of-the-way places, and "Off the Beaten Track," excite the wonder and admiration of the tourist who is lucky enough to behold them. Crossing some deep ravine or rushing rapid, we come to a very good bridge made of osiers, llanas, reeds, wire, twigs, limbs, and what not, all woven together, all in all forming a very safe affair for ourselves and pack-animals.

THE Inca roads (to return to them) were, because of their peculiar course, fitted only to the travelers of the day and time, *i. e.*: foot passengers, and llamas, but if they were not adapted to any other mode of travel, rapid transit was most assuredly performed over them by native runners, soldiers, imperial messengers, and other official delegates. We have absolute proof that the Peruvians had rural postmen long before they were known in Europe.

At the end of each stage, about two leagues or six miles, all along the road were small houses, wherein two Indian messengers were stationed day and night. One of these received the message to be carried from the preceding messenger, who shouted it while he was approaching the station, so that when the latter actually reached it, the other was on his way to the next post. Remarkable speeds were maintained by these carriers, and it is a matter of history that the ordinary time taken in the trip from Imperial Cuzco to Quito, some 1200 miles, was made in ten days! (Do I hear scoffers? Before you scoff, look this up and investigate.)

THIS road led through all sorts of wonderful places, and some of the ruins of the pre-Inca and megalithic people are considered by every one who has seen them to be far superior to anything Egypt can boast off. No one knows anything about these; their very traditions have been lost in the mists of centuries. At times we would be fifteen or sixteen thousand feet above sea-level and then way down in the valleys near it. Everywhere we found something wonderful, and the trip that all *Adventure* readers should make if they possibly could, is the trip from Antafogasta, Chile, up through La Paz and Tiahuanucu, Bolivia, across Lake Titicaca, up to Cucco, over to Lima, up to Cerro de Pazco, and then back home. There is but one place in the world that can show as many

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wonderful things that Nature has bestowed, as Peru, and that is our own God's Country, the "Good old U. S. A.," and even we are excelled in the wonderful ruins and traces of a long-forgotten people we find here in Inca land.

WE ARE leaving here next month for Huanucu Viejo, then on to Caxamarca, where Atahualpa, the last of the Incas was murdered by the Destroyers (whom some call the Conquistadores), then up through Quito into Bogota, as I wrote you before.

How much more of the road we will find I don't know, as we are taking the coast route from here passing through Truxillo and the wonderful Chan-Chan country, but shall hang on to its route, trusting in luck to pick it up here and there.

Since writing you, I have purchased a Panorama camera and a 5 x 7 Speed Graphic. We have films enough to take 1250 photographs. These with my Graflex and my Vest Pocket Kodak make a camera equipment hard to beat. Another thing I want to pay special tribute to is my little portable typewriter. I would not be without one for anything.

Shortly after I receive your reply to this, I shall enter the country of the bandits, and as the first seven days will be taken up in a trip through an exceedingly "bad" country, *quien sabe* what adventures will be met with?

I am not prone to write letters for publication, but inasmuch as the ambiguity of the statement in my letter to Mr. Hoffman was sufficient to cause a misunderstanding about the Inca Roads, I thought it best to write more fully.

Best regards to every one of you.—JOHN WINTHROP SARGENT.

HIS story in this issue is not his first in our magazine; but, probably through my fault, Stanley Shaw has not yet followed Camp-Fire custom and stood up to introduce himself. He has been in the business end of the theatrical game, an advertising manager, literary editor and business counselor, and he has got most of his adventures from the day's work.

One of the most quietly exciting moments I ever knew was, as a police reporter, seeing four stolid officers take from one room sixteen of the worst crooks that ever lived, each with a country-wide record, and as indifferently herd them into two "Black Marias" as though they were so many sheep. It was the famous "Albany Street" gang. Another was when the head of a great advertising agency, about to go to the wall, was signing his lawyer's application for bankruptcy proceedings, with tears in his eyes, just as his partner rushed into the office with an exclusive contract, that meant business salvation, from one of the world's largest users of publicity space.

Yet another was once when the late Joseph Haworth repeated the curse speech from *Richelieu* before its natural place in the play, because a note had been passed to him stating that the engines were coming down the street for a fire in the next building. He knew that the two or three minutes of wild applause that invariably followed that speech would drown the sound of the approaching apparatus and, perhaps, prevent a panic. The theater was burned flat after the audience had gone quietly out.

Oh, yes, there is quite as much adventure in politics or business as there is in a shipwreck or a hunt for buried treasure, and the writer has been in all four.—STANLEY SHAW.

THE following very interesting letter comes to us from Captain Achmed Abdullah, who, as some of you know, is an Afghan by birth and a British subject by naturalization and a recognized authority on India and the lands adjoining:

He refers to two points in one of Gordon McCreagh's letters printed in "Ask Adventure," saying that a certain dignitary was not, as stated, Regent of Tibet and that the Dalai-Lama did leave Lassa. When I wrote to Mr. McCreagh that Captain Abdullah had differed with two of his statements he replied as follows:

If I remember rightly, I answered this query from the Navy Aero School at Pensacola, where I had access to no books of reference and had to rely on only such information as I had on hand. . . . I bow to his superior knowledge in all things Oriental . . . It is a safe bet, since he has raised the question, that he speaks from facts which are not known to the general public.

Here is Captain Abdullah's letter:

Allow me to corect certain of my friend Gordon McCreagh's statements *re.* Tibet and the Dalai-Lama.

THE Tashilhumpo—so named after his capital which is also known as Shigatsé—is not, nor ever was, Regent of Tibet. He is a powerful abbot of the yellow-cap order, who formerly had the privilege of examining newly-born candidates for the Lassa Grand Lamaship and of ordaining the one finally selected for the new reincarnation. He is a Grand Lama by rank, and himself a reincarnation of the bastard Buddha known as *Amitabha*—"The Boundless Light"—(see Austine Waddell's "Buddhism" for details on this reincarnation). He has no temporal duties of any sort to perform, beyond supervising the immense landed estates of his monastery. The consequence is that he occupies himself altogether, or nearly so, with spiritual matters of faith, more so than the Grand Lama himself, has therefore a reputation, far superior to the latter's, in piety and learning and is generally called in consequence *Pan-Chen Rhimpo-Ché*—"The Re-Splendent Jewel of Learning."

THE Regent, at least when I was in Tibet as Intelligence Officer under Macdonald and Younghusband in 1903 and early 1904, was a Cardinal of the yellow-caps, known as *Kri Rimpoché*—"The Precious Enthroned"—and also as *Gahldaen 'Kri'disn-pá*—"Holder of the Gahldaen Throne"—a very learned and highly cultured gentleman who had complete authority over the great Tibetan State monasteries and also over all the yellow-caps

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who is not a reincarnation of any sort, but a man of "natural birth," who reaches his position through wisdom and scholarship. His Chinese name—if I remember rightly—is "The Noble-hearted Banner."

Furthermore, the Dalai-Lama *did* leave Lassa, besides his little trip into Sikkim. He did so in 1904. That was the chief effect of the Younghusband expedition. The Dalai left in a —— of a hurry, on the very day the British crossed the Tsangpo. Together with a retinue and Dorjieff, the Russian Buddhist and Intelligence Officer, he went first to Nagchuka, beyond the Tendri Lake, and finally to Urga, the capital of Mongolia, where, for many weeks, Buddhist pilgrims came to do him homage, chief of them Erettuyeff, the chief Russian Buddhist Lama of Eastern Siberia. The *Warsaw Gazette* in November, 1904, printed a detailed account of his arrival there. Too, the Indian Government, Survey Department, brought out a Blue Book to that effect.

IT IS not hard to reach Tibet. There are in Lassa, have always been there, Moslem and Nepalese Consuls. Christians, too, can go there. The easiest way would be *via* Baxa, in Northeastern Bengal, thence up *via* Tashi and Punakha, northwest to Chumolhari (all this in Bhutan), and cross the border there. It is quicker than the trip from Siliguri up the Chumbi. Not quite as cold, and more interesting.

Finally, the trade was *not* entirely carried on by Tibetans. For nearly all the so-called Tibetans, who traded into the North before the Younghusband intermezzo, were British subjects. Do you remember the Babu in Kipling's "Kim"? He is a conglomerate of several real characters, but chiefly is he meant to represent the explorer Krishna, known officially in the Survey (Intelligence) Department as A.-K. He was not a Babu, but a Tibetan, and a naturalized British subject. Others of the same sort, working for Britain, naturalized, and going freely into Tibet, were Lama Ugyen Gyatsho and Kuentuep, the latter having lived long in Darjeeling.

I believe that Krishna died recently, and that *Munsey's* magazine printed a charming obituary notice.

THE man who knew Tibet best, from an Intelligence Department point of view, was Babu Sarat Chandra Das of Bengal. From the Russian side the best was Dorjieff, above mentioned, and M. Tsybikoff, who brought some capital photos from Lassa in 1902. There was also a Japanese Buddhist priest, Kawaguchi by name, who went there the same year and had a rotten time of it . . . but all that—the last four—is another story, which I am going to put into story form some day.

I suppose you know that for many, many years the Jesuits had a mission, chapel and school in Lassa.

Pardon the lengthy letter. It got me going. Old memories, you know.—ACHMED ABDULLAH.

A WORD from Farnham Bishop and Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur on their story in this issue.

The Norman barons of the twelfth century ruled their conquered possessions in Sicily with savage brutality, plundering and exploiting their mixed Greek, Italian, and Arab subjects without restraint. *Gaimar*, the villain of our piece, is a much more accurate representative of his race than *Arnulfo*, the just Norman. But that there were a few just Normans is demonstrated by the fact that there was never a general uprising against them as a race. In making our heroine a girl of mixed Norman and Italian parentage, we have tried to give her a double inheritance: her Northern blood expressing itself in stern strength, her Southern blood bringing her into closer sympathy with her Sicilian subjects. She is neither Norman nor Roman at heart: she is Sicilian.

Arnulfo's castle is partly modeled on the ruins of Norman keeps in Sicily, and partly pieced together from descriptions of those keeps before they were ruined and looted. The builders were Norman; the workmen were the Greek and Arab natives, who put into their work all the rich artistry which was the peculiar property of their race.

SOME time ago, while he was still at Sayville, Edgar Young wrote the following letter to me but did not mail it till a month later. In the meantime we met, for the first time, had a long talk and got acquainted. I hope to meet him many other times.

He begins his letter by quoting word for word from the letter I send to every writer when he first joins our magazine, asking him to tell the Camp-Fire about himself so that we'll all be humans together instead of printed names. "So that your readers will feel they really know you." I made it strong, and now he turns it back on to Mr. Wade and me.

It has just occurred to me that you and Mr. Wade have dodged a part of your responsibility in this line. I used to think that an editor was not human—that he was a great Hocus-Pocus or something, back behind the scenes, but by constant effort of trying to get things straightened out in the niches where they belong I have finally come to the conclusion that editors and associate editors are, after all, human beings. I must have been suffering from embonpoint of the coco that it has taken me thirty-four years of my life to arrive at this conclusion.

ALSO, I will wager that this fact has never occurred to many readers of the magazine. The Camp-Fire section of *Adventure* is a strange place. The men who turn to this portion of the magazine first are all college men—with the various degrees given out by the Universities of Hard Knocks, of Adventure, of Experience. I have sat by camp-fires with hard-handed men who could jounce ahead the philosophy of Spencer, of Darwin, of Emerson, with men who could discuss glibly the trend of affairs after socialism had come and gone. To some of these men I owe more than I can repay. My education ended after a few years in free school and these men taught me the trick of thinking on my own initiative. Sometimes I don't make the hill but that's the fault of my

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motor. It wasn't built to take some hills "on high."

WE WILL forgive you if your college happens to be other than ours has been. The spirit of Adventure is big. It girdles the earth. It is the front rank of Life. There are many ways a man may qualify to step ahead into this front rank. In fact, I feel that both of you have qualified—and I never saw either of you personally. We want to hear about it. Start back about the callow age of ten or thereabouts. It's nothing but fair that you should do this. A good many of us have done so. People in this small village where I reside did not know that they entertained an ex-tramp and ex-filibuster in their midst, unawares, until I told about it in the Camp-Fire. Some of them right now don't know whether to run or make friends. But I have lived through it and they will live through it. Fitting this and that together we will all think and be better for having done so.

And if there is any one else down there behind the scenes—that fellow with the horn-shell glasses who reads MSS., that red-headed girl who holds down some desk or other, that young college chap who doesn't understand our bunch as yet—you can tag them and tell them they are "It," if you want to. A pretty good way to do is to *dare* them to. Down where I was raised they used to say that "a feller who'd take a dare would steal a sheep and eat the hair."

Gentlemen and Ladies of the Camp-Fire, we have with us to-night Mr. Arthur Sullivant Hoffman and Mr. Harry Erwin Wade, editor and associate editor of *Adventure* magazine.—EDGAR YOUNG.

It's fair. I'm fairly caught. I've managed to dodge it all these years, for I have no great adventures behind me and have felt that any account of myself would be dull reading for the rest of you. Some of you have asked me before and I sidestepped. Now it comes up square in my path. All right, let's have it over with, but remember I didn't start this.

As a matter of fact I'm glad to do it if it gets us better acquainted. I'm no hand for formality and haven't done it before only because there is so little of interest to say about myself:

Born, 1876, Columbus, Ohio. They've built a Y. M. C. A. building on the spot, I don't know why. My people on both sides were all Americans for some two hundred years; father the first (and unsuccessful) candidate for Congress the Republican party ever had in his southern Ohio district (around Jackson County); my maternal great-grandfather the founder of Franklinton, now Columbus.

COLUMBUS public schools; Ohio State University, '97; two years' teaching in Coshocton, O., high school; three as joint editor and owner weekly paper and job-printing plant in Troy, O.; 1902-3 a cub editor on the *Chautauquan*, Chautauqua, N. Y., and Chicago, with a graduate course in English at the Univ. of Chicago; 1903-10, assistant or managing editor of *Smart Set, Transatlantic Tales, Watson's, Delineator;* 1910 to date, managing editor or editor *Adventure*. Think of an editor of *Adventure* who has worked on *The Delineator* and the *Chautauquan!* Thank Heaven, those who know the game won't even grin; they know a job's a job. I understand the editor of the *Police Gazette* collects rare and beautiful objects of art, while I've known fellows off of church papers that were so tough—oh, well.

Adventures? Tame. Most of them while I was in my teens. Any devilment, author unknown, happening within half a mile of our house was fastened on to me as the most likely chance and I didn't suffer much from injustice. Except once when a policeman took pot-shots at me in the dark, thinking me a burglar. I've never been a burglar. At college I had a very good time but got through. Managed to play football eleven years, including four after college. The best game I know. As a kid, about 1889, had a wee taste of amateur cowboying; Kansas still largely open country then, neither wild nor tame.

HAVE traveled a little, but most of the time just in the ordinary way—U. S., Canada, Costa Rica, Canal Zone, Jamaica, Morocco, Spain, France, Holland, Belgium, Channel Islands, England, Wales, Ireland. In 1904 with two other fellows bicycled across Spain and France, keeping as much as possible out of the tourist track. Some pretty backwoods spots in Spain—places where a whole village turned out to see the fillings in our teeth, districts where neither bicycle or railroad train had ever been seen, where a camera couldn't even be explained, where they wore cowhide with the hair on. But all safe enough, except the Valdepeñas pass—which we went through on a train. A kindly and most polite folk, but giving us never a taste of real adventure, though there were times when we really suffered for water or food; there are some very dry stretches and sizeable deserts in Spain. And of course we were broke now and then.

Tried another wheel trip later—at least I'm spoiled for the ordinary tourist stunt—and had plenty of adventures but the —— wheel furnished them. There was one time when it was in four different places in Ireland and I in another. On the first trip, taken on four or five days' notice, I had a wheel that cost $17.50 but it got replaced piece by piece as we went along and must have been worth a lot more when I sold it for less in Normandy. It went over the Pyrenees tied together with rags and got down only by running into snow or a mountain torrent at intervals to cool hot-boxes.

THE only real tragedy we met was a preacher and some feminine satellites of his flock or family. One of these loud vegetarians. There aren't many vegetables in Spain except eggs, and, strangely enough, no chickens except a few pecking around your feet at table. Eggs, tortillas, everywhere, but no means of knowing who laid them. Vegetables, if any at all, used chiefly for garnishing meats. The first time we saw the preacher was in Tangier; only moderately thin; declaiming aloud over the Moroccan lack of vegetables. Next time, we saw him in Spain—Granada; still declaiming over getting no vegetables; still refusing to eat meat; markedly thinner. Third time, still declaiming and

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refusing, still thinner, the women satellites looking decidedly worried about him. Fourth time, so thin we could barely see him, too far gone to declaim. Last time, we saw only the women; he was gone entirely.

OF COURSE, like everybody else, I've had quick little adventures that sound bigger than they are. Four fires, a train wreck, an upset canoe, a tangle with a dead tree under water, a broken coal-mine car-cable, accidental or —— fool bullets that missed, the precipice you didn't go over in the dark, the horse that didn't come down on you when you were under his hoofs, etc., almost all of them having more scare than danger. One or two odd ones—was chased, caught and chewed by blood-hounds in Florida; aged six; rescued by my frail, delicate mother with her desperate bare hands, the same mother who, in a runaway, another woman having been thrown out, laid her baby down on the floor of the buggy, climbed out over the dashboard and along a shaft till she could pick up the dragging reins at the horse's collar, climbed back along the shaft with them and stopped the horse. I am proud to be her son. But they say family traits are likely to skip a generation.

Once, at college, when we were playing cards in an unpublic room of the museum, we were startled by a shriek from one of the assistants who leaped at an expressman opening a box of arrow-heads or something with a big hammer and a cold-chisel. The cold-chisel was a Civil War relic—a percussion shell which the professor had carried three miles in his arms to avoid the jarring of a trolley-car. Nope, it was rusty. But that didn't prevent all of us from going away at once and all at once.

Maybe I have one record. I was knocked down three times in three minutes by the same fellow, hit on exactly the same point of my jaw each time and lit on exactly the same spot each time and with exactly the same part of me, and didn't lose my pipe out of my mouth till the third landing.

HAVE hunted very little, fished much—the small-mouth black bass for mine; dabble with canoes, skis, snow-shoes; swim, skate, etc. Spend all my vacations on Maine lakes. In addition, travel over 5,000 miles during the other eleven months—*i. e.*, live out on Long Island and commute to the office! It does add up.

Am 6 ft. 1 in. and weigh only 160—15 lbs. less than when I left high school. Eat anything except liver, kidneys, tripe and brains. Nose crooked and one knee unsound (football). Am nuts on making things grow out of the ground; hate cities, hope to live in the country some day. Never play poker; once filled a royal flush from the middle, won two copper cents and quit forever. Used to be able to do 100 yards in under 11. Smoke Bull Durham, rolled or corn-cob. Married, one boy. Like lakes, open country, Westerners, chocolate, dogs and horses. Used to read a lot, but now almost nothing outside my work and newspapers. Too busy to do much except work, eat, sleep. The Camp-Fire is one of the best things I ever struck—has brought me many real friends.

ONE of the things I want most is to see our country get real democracy, cut off the flood of immigrants until she is able really to absorb them, make her political life clean instead of dirty, and attain the ideals of liberty, justice and equal opportunity she has so far attained only in small part.

I've talked a lot, but, having got started, I wanted to clean up the whole job and then close down permanently on the subject. Though my adventures are scanty, I'm with you in spirit. Drop in on me when you're in town. I'm always rushed, but I like to stop long enough at least to shake hands.—A. S. H.

And now I can pass it on to Mr. Wade, which I am very pleased to do:

The smoke is following around evidently to choke me off if I get to yarning. So it won't take long to tell how little has happened to me. But, seeing you've got me cornered, I'll stand up long enough to let you see I don't wear horn-rimmed spectacles, that I weigh 160, and hate the feel of a stiff collar.

HAVE been a traveling salesman; reporter; helped survey in the Alleghany and Blue Ridge Mountains; cut brush one Summer to keep a herd of sheep from caving in; tramped an eight-mile trap line half one Winter; taught both in a university and in a little worn-out lumber settlement on Buck-Tooth Ridge, to which I had to climb three miles every Winter's morning on snow-shoes. Was contributor to a few magazines, and for the past four years have been on *Adventure's* staff.

PLAYED baseball, basketball and billiards through high school, college, and play them now. Can't remember when I didn't prefer whipping a trout stream to seeing a World Series game or reading Stevenson.

Have fished and hunted from the Southern States to the White Mountains. My traveling has been confined to the U. S. and Canada—800 miles of it by canoe. Have been in three train wrecks, blown into the Hudson from a motor-boat, licked eight or ten times with gloves and without, know how it feels to be shot at, and have been butted into a barbed-wire fence by a buck sheep.

I HATE salt water, razor-back hogs, and every German soldier alive. Like Virginian mountaineers, most of the Camp-Fire crowd, and the Great Lakes when they behave.

The last three months I've been trying to learn how to clear a hill-crest and hit a Boche on the opposite slope with high explosive shell. Expect to be in an army camp playing a real game at last by the time this reaches you.

Some one give me a smoke.—H. E. W.

IN A letter the other day J. Allan Dunn spoke of the present war as "the Twentieth Century Crusade." I wonder the term hasn't come into general use. Particularly now that it has accomplished what most of the old-time crusades failed to accomplish—the capture of Jerusalem.

THE Gila monster has always been the subject of considerable debate but I don't think we've ever threshed out the subject at our Camp-Fire. Now, however,

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in connection with Major George B. Rodney's story in our Mid-November issue one of you brings the matter up. (It is, by the way, no longer Captain, but Major, Rodney and I know the Camp-Fire will join in congratulations.) Me, I'm no authority on Gila monsters and I stand from under, but the information sent in seems, to my lay mind, convincing and authoritative.

But I am considerable of an authority on liars, more so than some people suspect. I don't always recognize a liar when I see one, but I recognize 'em a whole lot oftener than some of the liars think I do. At any rate, I've known from the first that *Mr. John Wilkes* of Arizona is a liar. Every time he's appeared in one of Major Rodney's stories I've known he was a liar, an awful liar, and I'd taken it for granted that every one of you also knew it. That's one of the chief reasons Major Rodney, who created him, put him into a number of the stories we've read and enjoyed. *Mr. Wilkes* was such a picturesque, wholesale, habitual and free-handed liar that we thought you'd like to sit back and listen to him. Personally I wouldn't think of taking him as an authority on Gila mosters or anything else except lying, and I wouldn't trust him even on the subject of lying.

BUT our comrade who gives us the interesting facts on Gila monsters, though he undoubtedly recognizes *Mr. Wilkes* as a liar in general, seems to have taken him literally on Gila monsters. I can't blame him. *Mr. Wilkes* is a convincing liar, the kind that can let you know he's lying about some things yet make you believe him on others. That's real art. And highly dangerous.

As to our comrade's other criticisms I'm "agin" him on his criticism of "Gawd." I'm a poor speller, myself, but the Standard Dictionary gives "Navaho" as correct, giving it preference over "Navajo." Personally, I like "Navajo" better, maybe just because I'm used to it.

PRESCOTT, ARIZONA.

The Gila monster is a black (or very dark brown) and buff-colored reptile, has a thick stubbed tail and a warty skin. I never saw any spines along its back. Its nose and under jaw are black.

IT IS normally sluggish in movement and, unless angered, is generally considered to be harmless. It will not attack man on its own initiative as will a rattlesnake. It is poisonous. When poison-glands and fangs were not found in its upper jaw the question as to its being poisonous was raised, but a few years ago a naturalist who made a close study of the reptile found its poison-glands in the lower jaw and, I believe, that the teeth of the lower jaw acted as the poison ducts. When the Gila monster bites it hangs on like a bull-dog, to give time for the poison to exude and penetrate the wound.

Some years ago, here in Arizona, I saw a man bitten by one. He was holding it in one hand and striking its nose with the other, paying little attention to the possibilities. Suddenly the Gila monster grabbed his hand between the thumb and knuckle of the fore-finger and before its jaws could be *pried* loose his hand and arm began to swell and turn black. Only prompt attendance saved the man's life, as it was, he was laid up for several days. I knew of another case in Tucson where a half-drunken man teased one and laughed at those who warned him. The Gila monster grabbed his hand, also, assistance was delayed. The man died.

AS TO its breath being poisonous, that seems to be generally supposed—that the Gila monster uses its breath to stupefy its victim. I know of a case of a young man who claimed to have been poisoned by a Gila monster's breath when a child. At any rate he was always severely nauseated when near one in captivity and he claimed it was from its odor.

I have seen two fight and kill each other and when dead one or both would be gripping the other in its mouth.

NOW for the criticism. The horned toad does not hop. It runs. It is a lizard, not a toad.

Please have your authors spell Navajo correctly instead of "Navaho." Why, when using the name of God as an exclamation or an oath must the speaker invariably be supposed to pronounce it as it is spelled —"Gawd?" 'Twere better not to use it at all; but no man in exclamation or in swearing pronounces it other than God.—— —— ——

Now I sent Comrade ——'s letter on to Major Rodney, it being only fair that he should be heard in his own defense. Owing to his intimate relationship with *Mr. John Wilkes*, he is, of course, in a delicate position, torn between his friendship for *Mr. Wilkes* and his knowledge of that gentleman's habits of mind and tongue. I think he has acquitted himself with credit. I should, of course, like to know his own opinion on Gila monsters, but as he didn't offer them in the story itself, he seems quite within his rights to leave the burden where it belongs—on the shoulders of *Mr. John Wilkes* of Arizona. And if I know anything about *Mr. Wilkes* he won't care a ——. He's just that happy-go-lucky and irresponsible.

It's just as well to brand *Mr. Wilkes* right now as an utterly hopeless liar, for in a recent number of our magazine he told us in "The Fire-Bug" one of the most G-a-w-d-awful lies I've ever heard and I'd hate to

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think any of you even tried to find a single word of truth in it.

And now for Major Rodney's letter:

As regards the Gila monster, its habits, manners, dress, etc., I respectfully submit that while Mr. —— is probably correct in the main in what he says about them yet this interesting family of *helodermatidæ* is so large and its habitat so varied that I doubt if he ever knew this particular one that *Mr. Wilkes* says he saw.

AS FOR its color, well, all I can say is that *John Wilkes* says it had yellow on it. If he says he saw red, he undoubtedly saw red. Mr. .... does not criticise the other colors that *Mr. Wilkes* says he saw. Personally I see no reason to doubt that he saw yellow if he says he did.

The African and the Asiatic elephants are both elephants, yet they differ in many points. If two animals of the same species, as big as elephants, can vary as to color why should we deny to one miserable little Gila monster a little yellow? God knows he has few enough pleasures in life!

I have known *Mr. Wilkes* for many years. He lives in many places in Arizona. I have served in various parts of the State for a good many years and I have run across *Mr. Wilkes* wherever I happened to be and, except in matters of life and death, morals and mundane affairs in general, I have found him to be more or less truthful. Shall I doubt him now?

IN MY spelling Mr. —— hits me in a tenderer point. "Navajo" is certainly spelt with a "j" and not with an "h," a mistake due probably to a typographical error, but shall two consistent readers of *Adventure* fall out over a jay?

As for the spelling of the word "God," Mr. —— does me scant justice. I have read many books sacred and profane in tracing that word to its lair and I find it spelled one way quite as frequently as the other. *Mr. Wilkes* invariably pronounced it as though it were spelled "G-a-w-d." One man may spell it one way; one another. The god of the Patagonians was spelled with an "S" if we can believe Pigafetti or Shakespeare—Setebos. I may quote as my authority for this way of spelling the following:

"How all the gawdless rising at a venture
Question the spelling of stories in *Adventure*."

taken, no doubt, from that well-known old play "The Printer's Error," written in 1733 by John Smith of London.

At any rate, even if I am in error in quoting my authority for the spelling the only real evidence of the correctness of a signature or a name is the testimony of the owner of that name—testimony that in the present irreligious state of the world can not be obtained save through the doubtful authenticity of a ouiga-board.

This doesn't settle any thing, but I will never believe *John Wilkes* again—entirely, that is.—GEORGE B. RODNEY.

THE following letter from Captain James Moorhead, an old windjammer shipmaster, is not only good reading in itself but gives added interest to the complete novel in one of last Fall's issues. It tells of a real adventure, by one of those men who have made themselves a place in the history of the sea, on the very scene of a fictional adventure that we read a few months ago.

New York City.

As a steady reader of *Adventure* since its start, I have been deeply interested in your story "Wave Bound," by Samuel Alexander White, November 18, 1917, issue, as I spent several weeks on the Island of Amherst among those hardy fishermen, while salvaging cargo and wreck of schooner *Kocheko*, wrecked on point of Fortune Bay, while en route for Europe with cargo of birch timber from Campbeltown, Bay of Challeur.

I left Campbeltown November 15, 1892, bound for Queenstown for orders, with a cargo of fine, dry birch in lower hold and spruce deals in between decks and upper deck. Shortly after clearing Bay of Challeur I ran into one of the heaviest northeastern gales I ever experienced, and as I was carrying close-reefed lower sails to try to weather the Bird Rocks, I sprang a butt, the lower hold filling almost immediately and forcing us all to take to the rigging, where we were lashed for over twelve hours in a blinding snow-storm, the vessel almost awash, our only hope that she would hold together until the gale was over.

Forenoon of next day. As the gale was beginning to moderate I told one of the men to get down and see how it was in the forecastle, and he soon reported it perfectly dry. The cabin was entirely gutted out, as it was below deck, while the forecastle was secured on upper deck and safe by the deck-load all around it, so we all got in there and thought we had struck heaven, although our stores were all washed away.

We stayed there twenty-four hours, and as the gale had passed and changed to northwest wind and clear weather I sighted the "Magdaline Islands," and was surprised we had not drifted further south. After setting some sail on the wreck, I thought we could fetch around the point into Fortune Bay, but as we could not steer the wreck we grounded on the point, where we stood by until daylight. In the meantime the wind had shifted around southerly for another blow, and the pounding of the wreck on the bottom would knock you off your feet. I expected every minute to see the spars coming down about us.

As soon as daylight came, I went aloft and could see people running up and down the beach, but as they had no boats fit to stand such a sea as was running, I decided to make the attempt to land in our own boat, which was a fine able one and had been moored well astern of the wreck, all ready for such an emergency. About 9:30 A. M. we hauled her up as close as possible and watched our chance for a jump, most of us getting a good dip before reaching the boat. I jumped in last and cast off immediately on our perilous trip, getting the boat headed for shore and running before the terrible sea.

I watched my chance between seas and, urging the men to pull for their lives, I ran in on top of an extra large roller and the people on shore grappled the boat, helping us to hold her against the undertow and we were safe, almost by a miracle. The islanders took us in their carts, wet and hungry.

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over to Amherst, where we were given the best the poor people had, and after a good warming before raging wood fires we soon forgot all our suffering and troubles.

About November 25th I managed to get all my crew shipped on the Pictou steamer for Boston, via Pictou, and stayed behind to salvage the wreck and cargo, if any should be left, and got billeted with a good old French fisherman and his wife and I shall never forget their kindness to me. I soon got acquainted with the lighthouse-keeper, the only man who could talk English and who was very useful to me as an interpreter, also the old Judge, who was the head and practically the father of the whole community (and who is so like the description of *Monsieur Boucher* (*Admiral Pellier*) in your story "Wave Bound."

After the weather moderated in a few days, we notified all the islanders to come in, as I promised them a salvage of fifty per cent. on what they could bring ashore. I had lots of volunteers and, as the weather kept fine for a while, we soon had quite a lot of our spruce deals on shore, put up in different piles, also the birch timber, and named a day for the sale.

This was the most unique auction sale anybody could imagine. I did my own auctioneering (snowing most all the time), standing on a pile of lumber calling for a bid and raising it with all the haranguing I could do, dressed up in my old French host's coat, pants and cap. I supposed I looked the picture, but I managed the sale O. K., even to the last of the hulk standing up out of the sand; which was my last call, and fared very well for a finish of as fine a little vessel as ever was built.

The night we returned to the old French Judge's house we all worked hard and faithfully together, taking in the accounts of sales, paying out salvages, etc., and when day broke we were far from being finished with our job. I was very anxious to get finished up, as the captain of the Pictou steamer told me on the previous trip that this would be his last for the season and for me to be ready when he came back, as he would not leave me to spend the Winter at Amherst if he could help it. So when he arrived, in a day or so, I was pretty well ready to come away with him, although he waited nearly three hours for me at that, whistling for all he was worth for me to hurry up; and as I did not want to spend all Winter on that lonely island, I was glad to find myself on board the Pictou packet, at last bound for God's own country.'

Your story "Wave Bound" and its characters were so vivid to me that I could not resist writing you a kind of story of the shipwreck, where we all suffered so much from hunger and cold that I could not describe it. In closing I must not and never will forget the kindness of these hardy fishermen of Amherst, especially the old Judge and the lighthouse-keeper.

Arriving at Boston later on at about 6 P. M. and entering the office of my broker, J. J. Hall & Son, Mr. Hall took me for a tramp still dressed up in the old French fisherman's outfit, but after a good, square meal and some clothes I was soon myself again.

The Magdaline Islands are about the most desolate place, any time of the year, on the Atlantic coast. The couple of months I spent there were lonely enough, in the Fall of the year; what would it be in Winter? If the captain of the Pictou steamer had not waited for me over his time I would have had plenty of time in a long Winter to write a story of those lonely islands and the people who inhabit them.—CAPTAIN JAMES MOORHEAD.

P. S.—I might mention here, when we grounded on Fortune Bay, the crew wanted to land at once, but I told them they would have to wait until morning, and, taking the cook's ax from the galley, I climbed aft and gave all hands to understand that the first man that would attempt to get to the boat I would cut her adrift. So I had to sit there all night with a faithful colored cook and watch the boat, hanging away astern well moored with one hundred and fifty fathoms of good rope, but when we hauled the boat up next morning to leave the vessel I found a Greek sailor in her rolled up in the boat's sail. He got over and swam to the boat, thinking he was safer there than on board ship. It would have been better to have landed at night, as we landed in a heavy southeasterly gale, with a sea running like a mountain next morning, but it was unexpected.—Capt. J. M.

HERE'S word from an Australian comrade who helped take German New Guinea from the Huns, served later in Egypt and finally in France. We salute you, comrade. Yes, we know the name "Anzacs" all right. Everybody knows it now. Here's to them!

I omit the good things he says about our magazine but leave in a scrap about our Camp-Fire:

Ringwood, Oia Merriwa,
New South Wales, Australia.

Guess you can find room at the Camp-Fire for another comrade, hailing from the sheep country of N. S. W. I come amongst you not as a writer—but as a reader . . . . . I like . . . . . and above all its bohemian readers and writers, who foregather at the Camp-Fire from all parts of the world.

I HAVE had all my adventures packed inside the last two and a half years. Enlisted with the Australian Expeditionary Force early in 1915, with the island force that captured German New Guinea from the Huns. Followed a few months of hell—midst jungle, malarial fever, earthquake shocks and a little snipe-shooting with cannibalistic tribes. Later, sailed for Egypt and lived like Arabs for six months out in the desert—sand, sand everywhere. Hardship galore—lack of water and food principally. A few skirmishes with small parties of Turks made life livable.

ON 12th May, 1916, my brigade sailed from Abscandina to Marseilles. French people enthusiastically welcomed us. Guess you comrades of the Camp-Fire have heard of the name "Anzacs." After three days' sailing through La Belle France we hit a town at the rear of the line and, after a preliminary few weeks of training, we sailed into our first big shoot with Fritz and Co. Some battle place. Flembaix, July 19, 1916, we lost 8,000 men in fifteen hours in casualties. Think of it! Waterloo and Gettysburg fade into insignificance.

It was during this battle in France I got my ticket back home to sunny Australia. German

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5.9 shell exploded in trench my section was holding, buried us, and the end of the world came. Week later woke to semi-consciousness in a French hospital. Dazed, and paralyzed in both legs. Sent to England; five months bed; finally invalided home, after the most stirring adventures a man could wish for.

I AM pretty O. K. again now and am back on a station (we don't call 'em ranches here), sheep-growing and wheat-producing. Guess I am through with fighting abroad, but it's some job, crushing these Germans, and before we can do the thing properly every nation on the Allies' side will have to put forward the last man and the last dollar. German arrogance and tyranny must be wiped out. That's our job. It would make your heart ache to see the sights I saw in stricken Belgium. . . . . .

Well, I say, cheer and good luck to *Adventure*, to you, and to all comrades of the Camp-Fire.—Corporal J. W. MARTIN, late 30th Battalion, Australian Imperial Forces.

P. S.—Australia welcomes Uncle Sam and wishes her troops Godspeed on their departure for the greatest adventure of all—that of avenging the stricken countries of Europe and crushing German despotism and tyranny.

ANOTHER suggestion for preserving our Identification Cards. The card in question, sent me by Mr. Murphy, had been treated along its upper half.

Before long there may be an announcement that our metal cards are at last ready, but don't write in for them until there is a definite notice giving price and so forth.

Washington, D. C.

It was soaked in warm water for an hour and a half then dried by rubbing it off with a cloth. The upper part of the card was twice dipped in a solution of one part flexible collodion to one part acetic ether. The so-called New Skin preparation sold in drug stores ought to answer the same purpose. I believe that three or four dippings, allowing to dry thoroughly after each dipping and using a heavy, hard card, make as nearly an indestructible record as any one could want. Have given this well over a year's try-out myself.

Hoping this will help out some of the brothers.—G. D. MURPHY.

WORD from another old-timer of the West, with definite facts as to the death of Frank Gruard. These old-timers are of the kind of men we younger fellows particularly like to hear from and to give a warm welcome and a comfortable seat at our Camp-Fire. They can tell us wonderful tales, if they will, and we are eager for them:

Hudson, Wyoming.

In your issue of December 3, 1917, I notice a letter from the pen of E. A. Brininstool, author of "Trail Dust of a Maverick," in which he mentions two very warm friends of mine, namely, Mrs. T. J. Foster, of Sheridan, Wyoming, and Frank Gruard, one-time scout in the army operating against the Sioux.

HE ASKS if Frank is alive yet, and it is with sorrow that I have to answer no, that Frank has gone to that camp-fire from which none may return. Let us hope that his long years of faithful service for Uncle Sam have entitled him to a seat among the famous men who served so well in opening the now great State of Wyoming. Frank passed on over the last trail several years ago at St. Louis. As to where a copy of the book, "Life and Adventures of Frank Gruard," can be obtained I can not say, but believe there is a copy in the Wyoming State Library in Cheyenne. I do not know whether the author, Joe De Barthe, is yet alive or not. The last I heard of him he was selling patent medicine in Chicago, and that was about twelve years ago.

Mrs. T. J. Foster, so far as I know, is still alive and well at Sheridan, Wyoming.

Hoping Mr. Brininstool may secure some information from this scrawl, I am.—L. DAVIDSON.

IT SEEMS impossible to explain too often that our Camp-Fire is open to all. There is no ceremony or red-tape of any kind to be gone through with in order to be a member. Likewise, all our free services are open to *all*. You do *not* need to be a subscriber. You are asked only to observe the rules. For abuse of these services three men are now barred. All others welcome.

SO LONG as mail and general transportation conditions remain unsettled we ask both our subscribers and our newsstand buyers, if the magazine is delayed, to wait a reasonable time after the usual date of delivery before writing in to inquire. We provide against delays as best we can, but the delays do not run on a regular schedule.

And if you write in concerning any circulation matter, won't you address the Circulation Manager, *not* the editorial department or me personally? Glad to help when I can, but if it's a matter that the circulation department can handle, one that falls within their field, not mine, why not send it to them direct? I have quite a few little jobs of my own to attend to and, well, you know how it is.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

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ADVENTURE'S FREE SERVICES AND ADDRESSES

These services of *Adventure* are free to *any one.* They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules*, thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we *can* help you we're ready and willing to try.

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one friend, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free, *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Later we may furnish a metal card or tag. If interested in metal cards, say so on a *post-card—not* in a letter. No obligation entailed. These post-cards, filed, will guide us as to demand and number needed.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

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Will sell: All of 1916 and 1917, complete; in good condition.—J. C. FULLMER, 1614 Fourth Ave., Moline, Ill.

Will sell: July to December, 1915; April 1916 to July 1917; 22 numbers in all—15 cents each; buyer pays for carriage.—DONALD G. KEYSER, P. L. Box 303, Kalispell, Montana.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Remember

Magazines are made up ahead of time. An item received today is too late for the current issue; allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

Letter-Friends Back Home

A Free Service Department for American, Canadian, and Other Allied Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and Others in Camp or at the Front.

Any one in the United States or Allied service who wishes to brighten the time with letters from "back home" or wherever else this magazine circulates, and with the personal touch and interest of hitherto unknown friends, can secure these letters and these friends by sending us his name and military address to be published once in this department as soon as censorship of soldiers' foreign addresses permits. In the meantime his address can be printed as "care *Adventure*," letters to be forwarded at once by us to the military address he gives us in confidence. Among our readers of both sexes, all classes and from all parts of the world, he is likely to gain a number of friendly, personal correspondents. He is free to answer only such as he is comfortably able to answer under the conditions that surround him, and it is even suggested that the number of correspondents for any one man be determined by the needs of his comrades as well as by his own.

This magazine, of course, assumes no responsibility other than the publishing of these names and addresses as its space will permit. Experience has shown that the service offered is a very real and needed one, and all not themselves in service are asked to do their part in making the daily life of those fighting in our defense brighter and pleasanter through personal friendships across the intervening miles and by whatever personal, human kindnesses such friendships may suggest.

When giving your military address make it as permanent a one as possible.

(As the magazine is made up several months in advance, the above notice will appear with only such stray names as happen to come in to us until there has been time for it to reach the camps and the front and for names and addresses to reach us, be put in type and then reach our readers on publication.)

SCOUT A. E. ANDERSON, Reg. No. 13215, 6th Batt. Canadians, 1st C. E. F., France.

ELLIS G. BYRON, care of *Adventure.*

HERMANN ZABEL, care of *Adventure.*

CORPORAL T. MULLETT, A Coy., W. C. E. F., South Camp, Niagara Falls, Ont., Canada.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located one out of about every five inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Addresses

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. First suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 731 Guardian Bldg., Cleveland, O., in charge of preliminary organizing.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

High-School Volunteers of the U. S.—An organization promoting a democratic system of military training in American high schools. Address *Everybody's*, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

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Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for Adventure Magazine by our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each month in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable and standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

1. Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care Authors' League of America, Aeolian Hall, New York. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Also temporarily covering South American coast from Valparaiso south around the Cape and up to the River Plate. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

2. The Sea Part 1
J. P. TUCKER, Hotel Lansdale, 1410 Minor Ave., Seattle, Wash. Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S. and British Empire; seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care Authors' League of America, Aeolian Hall, New York. Such questions as pertain to the sea, ships and men, local to the U. S. should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Tucker.

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; river, lake and road travel, game, fish and woodscraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs, and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Johnson City, Tenn. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

6. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine. Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Western U. S. Part 1
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

8. Western U. S. Part 2
CAPT.-ADJ. JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, Yankton, S. Dak. Covering the Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri. Hunting, fishing, travel. *Especially* early history of Missouri Valley.

9. Western U. S. Part 3 and Mexico Part 1
J. W. ROBERTSON, 912 W. Lynn Street, Austin, Texas. Covering Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and the border states of old Mexico: Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas.

10. Mexico Part 2
J. W. WHITEAKER, Cedar Park, Texas. Covering Central and Southern Mexico below a line drawn from Tampico to Mazatlan. History, geography, customs, government, animals, minerals, products and industries.

11. North American Snow Countries Part 1
ROBERT E. PINKERTON, care of Starbuck Ranch, Morrison, Colorado. Covering Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Manitoba, a strip of Ontario between Minn. and C. P. R'y. Canoes and snow-shoes; methods and materials of Summer and Winter subsistence, shelter and travel, for recreation or business.

12. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 2
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Covering Height of Land and northern parts of Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. R'y); southeastern parts of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer, Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit.

13. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 3
GEORGE L. CATTON, Gravenhurst, Muskoka, Ont., Canada. Covering Southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing.

14. North American Snow Countries Part 4
ED. L. CARSON, Arlington, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game; minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

15. North American Snow Countries Part 5
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Covering Alaska. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipments, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

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16. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 397 Monadnock Bldg., San Francisco, Calif. Covering customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

17. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, Nitro, West Va. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

18. The Balkans
ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH, *Evening Post*, 20 Vesey St., New York City. Covering Rumania, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Turkey (in Europe); travel, sport, customs, language, local conditions, markets, industries.

19. Asia, Southern
GORDON MCCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports; hunting, trading, traveling.

20. Japan and Korea
ROBERT WELLES RITCHIE, Mountain Lakes, N. J. Covering travel, hunting, customs of people, art and curios.

21. Russia and Eastern Siberia
CAPTAIN A. M. LOCHWITZKY (Formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), Quartermaster, U. S. Troops, Mercedes, Texas. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalin; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

22. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, 1604 Chapin Ave., Burlingame, Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

23. Africa Part 2
GEORGE E. HOLT, Castle View, Meriden, Conn. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, etc.

24. ★ Africa Part 3 Portugese East Africa
R. W. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Covering trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc.

25. Africa Part 4 Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East Africa, Uganda, and the Upper Congo.
CHARLES BEADLE, care Paul Tausig & Son, 104 E. 14th St., New York, N. Y. Covering geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, mining, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, opportunities for adventure and sport.

26. ★ New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen.

27. Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, 1106 Van Nuys Building, Los Angeles, Cal. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, H. I. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba. Or J. V. Knight, Director, Republic of Cuba News Bureau, Woolworth Building, New York.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen., Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

★ (*Enclose addressed envelope with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached*)

Mining in Mexico

Question:—"What chance has a man to locate a mineral claim, a probable mine, or a placer mining claim in Mexico, around Sinola? Can a man get employment there? I am a carpenter by trade and have been employed in that capacity around mines, mills, smelts, etc., as well as bridge and house building. I have an all-around knowledge of mining and am a fair woodsman, used to roughing it Would a 35-caliber auto-loading rifle be too short-ranged for hunting?"—CHAS. ANDERSON, Houghton, Mich.

Answer, by Mr. Whiteaker:—The chances for the locating of mineral claims in Mexico are slim, as most of the great mining interests have control of the land on which you would be likely to want to file. The other parts, you nor no other man would care to go to. The placer mining is of yesterday, except in the savage Indian country, where you could not hire a Mexican or a white man that knows anything about the country to go, as the Indians are jealous of their mines.

The chances for an industrious man are fine in some parts of the republic. It would be better for you to work for some one else and learn the ropes before starting out on your own hook.

In Sinola, you seem to give it the preference, the mountains are highly mineralized in gold, silver, copper, iron and lead. The richest agricultural section occupies a strip of territory lying along the western slope of the Sierra Madres, and then between this and the Gulf of California. There are over two hundred rivers rising in the Sierra Madres and emptying in the Gulf, so you see the State is well watered. In the mountains the climate is temperate with cold nights and on the coast it is warm. The fauna and floral are rich and varied; sugar-cane is grown extensively. All kinds of game in the mountains.

Mazatlan is a fine seaport, with a population of about twenty thousand, and is attractive on account of the fine coconut groves which surround it. It is in touch with European, South American and other foreign seaports. The town is located about twenty-four feet above the level of the sea.

Durango the capital of the State of the same name, has a population of about forty thousand and is in the center of a rich mining district—there are about one hundred and twenty mines in operation—iron, gold, silver, sulfur, rubies and other valuable deposits. There is a mine in this State that is of pure iron. The chief mining districts are: San Juan, Del Rio, Tamazula, Durango and Nombre de Dios. Fine forests, verduous glens and wide valleys are between the ranges of mountains, which are from 7,000 to 10,000 feet high.

Grizzly, black and cinnamon bears, wolves, deer, and wild turkey range the higher Sierras, and duck, wild geese and other birds in the lowlands. Corn, wheat, tobacco, cotton, fruits, sugar-cane and leguminous plants are among the products of the agricultural districts. One thing to look out for here is the deadly scorpion, which is found in countless numbers and is worst in cold weather, when sometimes whole districts are vacated by the people. The Government pays a *centavo* apiece for the dead

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ones, so many people make a living by killing them.

Queretaro, 37,000 population, is also in a rich mining district. Both the tropical and temperate fruits are raised here and also other agricultural products. Rainfall is moderate—frost in the highlands light. The most common sickness is malarial fever. Plenty of game.

Zacatecas, 35,000 population, is in a rich mineral district. Unhealthy on account of sudden changes of weather. Thin chilly air in the mountains and pneumonia is the worst dreaded disease, of which the death rate is high. Surface water is scarce so many make their living by getting water from some of the flooded mines and selling it so much a drink, so one ought to be careful and not drink water unless it is boiled, that these men sell.

All of the States in my territory have more or less mining in them, but I gave you those that are nearest to the United States.

An industrious white man can make a good living, if he knows his work, as wages are high in some parts, and put something by for a rainy day; that is if he does not try to beat the Mexican at his own game of gambling, of which there are many devices by which a man is separated from his coin.

A 30-30 is my favorite caliber for deer and I expect that you will find more of these used than the .35-caliber. Take plenty of cartridges with you as you may not be able to get them over there. There will be a small duty charged on the cartridges and gun—also the number of the gun will be taken as also a description of yourself at the custom-house.

Another thing, remember that you are in the North where there is at least six months of cold weather, while down in Mexico, except in the mountains, a frost is a rare thing, so don't get any clothes until after you get here and see what you need, as it will be money or rather clothes thrown away. And something else—if you have money keep it under your hat and do not let any one know it, for throats are slit for a five-spot quite often in that country.

When you become located, put your money in a bank or some other safe place and never carry any large amount—not over five dollars United States or ten dollars Mexican—in your pocket at one time. Change about ten dollars into Mexican which will be twenty dollars before you cross the line. Pay in Mexican money whatever you buy, so that they will not skin you. Their money talks just as loud as the United States money, but you are liable to pay in our money when they mean theirs. Get me?

Better place at least half of your money in some bank on this side, so if you do meet with an accident you will have something to fall back on. You can get the money easily if you need it and if you don't need it, it will be safe and you will be that much ahead. Don't burn all of your bridges behind you. I've found a reserve left on this side to come in rather handy more than once and I have met fellows over there that did not leave any behind and wished that they had.

Times are troublesome in Mexico at present and I'd advise a man that has a good position in the United States to stick to it. Of course, if the wanderlust has shifted to your feet, the best thing to do both mentally and physically is to work it out of your system. I've been in that condition myself, and, found the remedy applied very effectively.

There are four ways to get into Mexico through Texas: by Brownsville, Laredo, Eagle Pass and El Paso.

The best road is from St. Louis, Missouri, to San Antonio, Texas, via the Katy (M. K. & T.) and from S. A. to Laredo, Eagle Pass and El Paso, via the Southern Pacific (S. P.).

The cheapest way would be to go down the Mississippi by boat to New Orleans and from there over to Tampico, but it would not be nearly so interesting as to go by rail.

Conditions in Samoa

Question:—"Can you give me some information regarding the land in Samoa, as to homesteading, farming, cattle and sheep-raising? Is there any hunting there and what kind of game? How is the fishing? Are the natives friendly? Are the roads good for an auto?"—M. L. SUTHERLAND, Chattanooga, Tenn.

Answer, by Mr. Mills:—Samoa is not suitable for homestead farming or sheep and cattle raising. These things are not done there. Being in the tropics, they grow things, instead of raising them. The islands are devoted to the coconut and rubber plantations, whilst tobacco, coco beans, coffee, and such like products are cultivated.

Land is not difficult nor dear—and you can get it either on the American Samoa or the British Samoa Group. Up till a little over three years ago the Germans also had a share in Samoa, but a New Zealand expeditionary force captured Samoa from the enemy. There is no hunting in the islands in the common acceptance of the term "hunting;" but there is plenty of sport. Fishing is great—from the "big game" of the tiger of the sea—the shark—to a large variety of smaller fry in any part of the Pacific.

The natives are particularly friendly in the Samoan Group, and very hospitable, especially inland. But they have become commercial in these latter days—you pay for the hospitality.

The South Sea Islands, being of coral formation, are not designed by nature for motoring, but at Apia there are roads over which a car can travel. It would be wise to first pick your island, and then see about your car—which would otherwise be a very cumbersome thing to have amongst your luggage for a casual tour of the islands.

The Alaskan Labor Market

Question:—"I intend making a trip into Alaska next Summer. Do you think a man could make a comfortable living there as a laborer? Are there any fur companies there that employ men during the Winter? What is the fare there from Seattle, Washington? What place in Alaska seems to be the most prosperous and the best place to go?"———, Fort D. A. Russell, Wyoming.

Answer, by Mr. Solomons:—You bet a man can make a comfortable living in Alaska as a laborer. So many want to do "genteel" work or be a mining king right away that plain labor, which is the principal vocation up there is rarely overdone. The market is large wherever there are settlements. $3 to $5 or $6 a day and board and lodging are the wages. I doubt whether there are any fur companies employing men to trap. There were none

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wherever I have been in Alaska, some years ago. But any of the trading companies and stores will cheerfully take all the skins you can bring in.

In the Canadian North and Northwest there is the Hudson's Bay Co. and one or two other big concerns like Revillon Frères that employ men. There is no particular advantage in it in countries as well supplied with means of transportation as Alaska. You can do better to trade locally or send out your furs by parcel post or express.

The fare from Seattle to Coast points varies from about $25 to $50 according to distance and "class" of travel; to interior Alaska $100 and up. To Nome the fare is $50 to $75. Several camps are about equally prosperous—Fairbanks, Ruby, Iditarod, and Nome. But there is always some new place or some revival in an outlying creek of the old places where, for the time, things boom and there are good chances for lucky or brainy tenderfeet. If I were going in I would consider it about a toss-up which camp to locate in. The idea is to go in and look about—eyes open and mouth shut—also pockets till you are "on" to things.

The Peace River Country

Question:—"Will you give me a general outline of the country along the Peace River between Fort St. John and Lake Athabasca? Is there much timber? Would one be able to put up enough wild hay to last a jack and a saddle outfit through the Winter? What kinds of game are there? What is the general depth of snow in Winter and how long does it last? Are there plenty of small streams? What would it cost four to live there a year, providing they were good shots?"—F. F. Wilder, Mt. Pleasant, Mich.

Answer, by Mr. Carson:—The distance from Fort St. John to Lake Athabasca is nearly nine hundred miles going by way of Fort Vermillion and a general outline of a district of such an extent would make a book. It is typical Northern country, the river being a rather slow stream averaging I should judge about six miles per hours. Between Fort St. John and Peace River Crossing there are a couple of bad rapids, one in particular, Ne Parle Pas, giving you an even chance between being smashed on the rocks by keeping in close to shore or swamped by rollers in the middle.

From the Crossing to Fort Vermillion the traveling is good by canoe, distance about three hundred miles. Below Fort Vermillion I have never been by water but there is a fall to be passed that means a portage. A better route is by way of the Lesser Slave and Athabasca River.

The country for the most part is bench land along the river, some of the valleys being several miles across. There is very little timber that would appeal to a lumberman but there is plenty of stuff about twelve or fourteen inches at the stump that is all right for cabins or fuel. It is mostly spruce, hemlock, balsam, and jack-pine and pretty bushy.

Horses and cattle may Winter out but this is a chance. It is better to put up wild hay for them of which there is abundance throughout the entire district. There are wide stretches of regular prairie that will give you all the hay you care to cut and perhaps just a little bit more.

There are plenty of bear and moose and in a trip such as you contemplate you would be almost certain to run across caribou. These beggars are such wanderers that they are to be found where they are, not where they ought to be.

It is also a good fur country, fox and lynx being fairly plentiful as well as the smaller fry. I have not mentioned deer and jack-rabbits since these are always taken for granted.

The climate is much the same as Manitoba except that the blizzard is not known. The break-up comes about the last week in March after which it is very pleasant owing to the long period of daylight due to the distance north. The snow is no worse than in your present State of Michigan and I imagine stays about as late. Those who have tried farming there tell me that seeding begins about the middle of April which seems to answer this question fairly well.

There are plenty of small streams, the country being well watered.

Allow yourselves about three hundred dollars per man for a year's living. This means economy and there is something more than good shooting needed to make it stick, that is, good curing after your meat is secured. This can be learned by a little experience and there is no real danger of starvation.

Now just a word of unsolicited advice. If you are heading for Lake Athabasca by way of the Peace you have no business at Fort St. John. Your reasonable route is either by way of Peace River Crossing or Athabasca Landing. This means to go by way of Edmonton. Of course if you wish to take a trip through Rocky Mountain Cañon that is another matter. The point I am making is that Fort St. John is a long way off the direct route to Fort Chippewayn which I suppose to be your outfitting point and general headquarters while in that country.

A Craft for Cruising

Question:—"I want to build a cruising craft of about thirty tons for sailing, with auxiliary power, and for cruising in the Pacific. What kind of a craft would be best? Where could I get plans and specifications for same? What books can I get on boat-building that would be helpful? I am a carpenter and millwright and would like to build my own craft. On what part of the coast can I get material cheapest?"—George E. Weir, Alhambra, Cal.

Answer, by Captain Dingle:—I am answering your query for Mr. Hurst who is in the hospital.

Opinions differ about the best crusing craft. For thirty tons, auxiliary, my own preference is for the ketch, or pole-mast schooner, with the ketch coming first. My reason for this is, that all the work of reefing, the most arduous because it is always done, or mostly, when the weather is unpleasant, can be done on deck, without laying out over the stern to pass the clew-lashing.

As for type of boat, I lean toward the short overhang, good beam, keel type. There are no better craft afloat than the MacManus fishermen out of Gloucester and Boston; and these boats can be rigged either as ketches or schooners. Best of all, if you make your boat of the modified "Knockabout" type, where you have no bowsprit, but set your headsail on the forestay coming down to the stem-head, you'll have no outboard work at all.

For books, there are so many, of so wide a range that I hesitate to recommend any particular one

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Haven't you a good library in Alhambra? There must be one near, anyway. Why not go and ask for all their books of boat and ship building, read them all, and send for the one that suits you best from the publishers.

Aside from this, I can only suggest "Practical Boat-Building and Sailing," by Nelson, Kemp, and Davies, which you can get by sending the price, three dollars, to the Rudder Company, 254 West Thirty-fourth Street, New York. Even this may not give you what you want, but it is a useful work anyhow. Or you might write to Greene Shipbuilding Company, East Boston, Mass.; tell them your plans, and ask them if they will help you to get specifications of such a boat as you want. They build splendid knockabout ketches, perhaps more suitable for you than the MacManus model, since thirty tons is rather small for MacManus. But I believe you will get the best results by consulting a library first.

As for cost of material, I am not posted on Coast prices at all; but I think you would do very well in San Diego, where you can also consult a 25,000-book library.

A Mining Trip to Honduras

Question:—"Two of us are going on a placer gold-seeking trip into the Segovia district of Honduras. We shall have about three hundred dollars besides our camping outfit, guns and clothing. What month of the year do you think best to start in? What clothing and blankets should we take? What is the average temperature in the lowlands? When is the Honduras rainy season? What is the usual price of a burro? What is the fare from New Orleans to Puerto Cortes, Honduras. What do you think of this place for a starting-point? What kinds of food are best in Central America and least affected by the climate?"—JOHN REISCHMANN, Chicago, Ill.

Answer, by Mr. Young:—The two halves of Nicaragua are quite different as to climate. In the eastern half it rains frequently during the entire year while in the western the wet season is from May to October and the dry from October to May. Now is as good a time as any if you are going up the Segovia.

Ordinary khaki clothing is good, or just plain overalls, with jackets or jumpers. High-top shoes, or ordinary shoes with short canvas leggings are good. A stiff-brim Stetson is a good hat for it sheds water.

Please write to Sr. Dr. Juaquin Cuadra Zavala, Nicaraguan Legation, Washington, D. C., "The Burlington," and ask him to send you the series of articles written by Major Gillette concerning mining in eastern Nicaragua. If you can get this series of articles they are more complete than anything I can give you by letter. I understand they are distributing them free. Also please write the Department of Commerce, Washington, D. C., for anything they have concerning mining in Eastern Nicaragua and Honduras.

The heat is not excessive, rarely reaching ninety degrees Fahrenheit, but the humidity is great, so that you feel it more, but no one ever has sunstroke. In the mountains it is cooler as you ascend. I have suffered from cold in some of the mountain regions.

The climate of Honduras is similar to that of Nicaragua.

You *can* live off of the country. A man can cut a living from the jungles in the eastern part with a knife. With a gun and a fish-hook the problem is easy, therefore, what you take depends on you. Better hire a native servant for a few cents a day. He is worth it for he knows how to live cheap.

My suggestion would be to go *via* the Panama Canal to Corinto on the west coast of Nicaragua. Take the train to Leon and then go overland to the headwaters of the river. This railroad is owned by Americans, or to be more exact, owned partly by Americans and partly by the Nicaragua Government. The fare from New Orleans to Colon is about sixty-five dollars and about forty dollars from there to Corinto. Fares are going up. I can't keep track of them. There is a ticket sold from New York to San Francisco *via* Panama for one hundred dollars first, and forty dollars second. As good a plan as any is to buy the second-class ticket, get off in Panama sell the rest of the ticket and buy another to Corinto.

A burro is worth two or three dollars in either country. Beans, rice, lard, and sugar, are pretty good to take along. If you do go in from the east coast I would suggest the port of Gracias a Dios.

Trapping in the Adirondacks

Question:—"Is there any chance for an eighteen-year-old boy to earn a living in the Adirondacks? What part of the mountains would you advise and what fur-bearers are there? How many steel-traps would I need and how many dead-falls? Could a person go by canoe from near Cohoes up the Hudson to the Adirondacks? Are there many streams for water animals? What is the temperature in the coldest part of the year? How much would an outfit cost?"—WALDEMAR BURDING, Speonk, N. Y.

Answer, by Mr. Spears:—Trapping is such a precarious method of earning a living that none could say that a living could be made anywhere. But there are several men in the Adirondacks who make part of their living trapping; they usually trap Winters and farm it Summers. But they are men who know the country well and who have been all over their own territory so often that they can find the fur places without difficulty.

Fisher, mink, marten, foxes, weasels, some otter, muskrats are the furs in the deep woods; sometimes bears. Trap-lines run from near settlements to the deep woods, thirty to fifty miles back. Many trappers of the woods are contemplating trapping through the lower clearings and out through the farm country, however, running lines with automobiles because fur is scarce in big woods.

Food supply is a matter of paying the price at the stores—and the price is very high ten or twenty miles from railroad, or on railroad. A canoe trip up the Hudson is feasible, but not for trapping. One packs his outfit on his back up the woods trails. The temperature runs down to forty to sixty degrees below zero in February, and I measured seven feet of snow on the woods level one mid-February.

You would have to have four or five camping outfits, one for each cabin—blankets, stove, ax (to carry) one-man cross-cut saw to lay in wood at each camp, grub, etc. Traps according to length of line and trapping done; I suppose three hundred to five hundred dollars would be the Adirondack figures.

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For "spot" trapping, one outfit, and say forty or fifty traps, including two bear, eight fox, ten fisher, thirty mink, rats, weasels, martens. You need pretty warm clothes and footwear. A Summer prospecting trip in the mountains would help you decide. Wouldn't it be better to go South?

The Texas Rangers

Question:—"I want to get all the information you have about the Texas Ranger Service pay, requirements to enter, to whom to apply for information and so forth."—J. E. BENNETT, Meshoppen, Pa.

Answer, by Mr. Robertson:—The Texas Rangers at present consist of four companies of twenty men each, and captain, making a total of eighty-four men in the service. The last legislature provided for a substantial increase, but for some reason the adjutant-general has not made this increase.

The pay of a ranger is about fifty dollars a month, his board and expenses furnished, he however, to pay for feed and upkeep of horse, when necessary to use one. He—the ranger—is sworn in for the period of one year, he makes oath to obey his superior officer, the same as a soldier, and to uphold the laws, and never under any circumstance to give up his weapons, not even if the other man has him covered. There are sergeants, and corporals, and captains, the organization is somewhat the same as the Army, you can see.

To be a ranger a man must be able to rough it, he must be able to handle any kind of a gun and be able to shoot to kill when necessary. He must be a good horseman, and have plenty of nerve. They prefer men who have been officers of the law at some time or other, though this is not an iron-clad rule. He must be able to speak Mexican and must know something about Mexicans, and their customs.

The recruiting and commanding officer of the force is the adjutant-general. All communications should be addressed to the adjutant-general, State of Texas, Austin, Texas, for information and to apply to enter the service. There is always a long waiting list of applicants, so do not be discouraged if you do not hear from your application at once.

The Maine Lumber Camps

Question:—"The agent of a Maine lumber camp was in town today, and I tried to get a job; he told me I was too young. I am eighteen years of age. Can you give me some addresses of camps where I could write and get a job, and would they advance me my fare and an outfit?"—ALFRED FREITAS, Hartford, Conn.

Answer, by Dr. Hathorne:—There is plenty of work in the Maine woods for good rugged young men eighteen years of age. If you can not handle an ax or drive a team, there is work around camp such as helping the cook, etc.

It is not of much use to write to the concerns, as they prefer to see the men they are hiring.

There are many agencies in Boston that hire men for this work, and most of them pay the fares to the woods.

The pay is around $50 per month with board, or if you can drive a team or use an ax, you could probably get $2 per day. You might write to the Burr, or Bragg employment agency here, who hire men for this work.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada.

ADVENTURE HAS FOUND ONE MAN OUT OF EVERY FIVE ASKED FOR DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS

CHAMBERLAIN, CARL D. Last heard of February 28, 1914, in Seattle, Washington, and Regina, Canada. He is 5 ft. 1 in. high, weighs 165 lbs, light hair, blue eyes, a fluent talker, collector of birds' eggs. Most likely to be found among labor and socialistic assemblies. His mother is almost distracted. Any news of him will be highly appreciated by me.—Address A. L. CHAMBERLAIN, 39 Broadway, Asheville, N. C.

CROSS, HORACE KEITH. Son. Last heard from at McAlister, Okla., March 25, 1914, on his way to Little Rock, Arkansas. If any one knows anything of him please write.—MRS. FLORA A. CROSS, Mason City, Ill.

CHASE, S. Last heard of in Chicago with the C. & O. Railroad in 1915. Will he please write his old pal.—Address A. C. YOUNG, Bremo Bluff, Va.

MCNAULTY, FRANCIS (Micky). Worked for Grant Smith, railroad contractor at Hesper, Mont., in July, 1917. Had a claim at one time at Ponce Coupe, Canada.—Address EDMUND E. DALY (Chi), 5112 Argyle St., Chicago, Illinois.

CILCH: As soon as you read this write me, your friend.—Address NELS ESPELAND, General Delivery, Chicago, Illinois.

CRANSTON, ARTHUR W. Last heard of at Savage, Minn., about twelve years ago. Probably went further west. Age 29 years, slight of build, sandy hair and blue eyes. His brother would appreciate any information about him in the past 12 years or his present whereabouts.—Address ERNEST L. CRANSTON, Flagstaff, Arizona.

KAROKO, PETER. Last heard of in Youngstown, Ohio. Dark complexion about 5 ft. 2 in. in height. Stutters in his talk. Left Youngstown, Ohio, in 1912. Mother married a widower and left here for Oshkosh, Wis. —Address JOSEPH HALUSHA, JR., 524 Steel St., Youngstown, Ohio.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

NELSON, EARL. Electrician, radio, Naval Reserve—last heard of aboard U. S. S. *Charleston*, communicate with BOB LEARY, 821 Forest Ave., Buffalo, N. Y.

MACVOURNIE: ERNEST, AUBREY, EDDIE, GORDON, FRANK AND HATTIE (five brothers and sister). Last heard of Medicine Hat, Alberta, N. W. T., Canada. Anybody knowing anything of their whereabouts, address their sister May—MRS. WM. A. SMITH, 4668 Hollywood Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif.

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BRIGMAN, J. D. Last heard from in 1915 at Hutching, Ark. Height 6 ft. Weight 165 lbs. Complexion dark. Does sawmill work. Any information will be appreciated by his brother.—Address B. F. BRIGMAN, Box No. 5, Chestnut, La.

GILLMORE, EDW. E. Brother. Last heard of in the State of Nebraska, if still alive is in the Middle States or else in Canada. Write to—CHAS. H. GILLMORE, Montana Ranch, Hynes, Calif., Care of Roy White.

MIROVOYE, JOHN. Age 21 years. Living in Youngstown, Ohio, when last heard of 8 years ago. Your brother Steve needs you. Please answer, very important.—Address STEVE MIROVOYE, 69 East Larnard St., Detroit, Mich.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the First February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

ELLIS, LLOYD W. Age 25. Last heard of in Los Angeles. Served in Co. K, 13th Inf., Manila, P. I., 1912 to 1915. Before that lived in Kokomo, Ind. Please communicate with your old pal.—Address PATRICK K. COOPER, Co. D, 2d Inf., Honolulu, H. I.

KLINE, Paul A. (Seagoin' Weenie). Former seaman, United States Navy, where are you now? Write your old shipmate, JAMES J. BURKE, Chief Yeoman, Care Receiving Ship at Philadelphia.

SMITH, GEORGE. Was last heard of at Denver, Colorado, about December 20th. He is a young chap and rather fair, about 22 or 23 years of age. Any information would be thankfully received—Address I. BYRON, 131 Main St., Saskatoon, Sask., Canada.

MENK, WILLIAM. Machinist. Last heard from Boston, Mass., and wife Mabel. We were in Rochester, N. Y., 1916. We would like to hear from you.—Address JAMES CUDDIHY, 1619 Cedar St., Milwaukee, Wis.

DANIEL, JOHN B. Was in Centreville, Texas, in 1914. Said he was going to the Wheat Belt. 37 years old, 5 ft. 6 in., dark hair, brown eyes, wore glasses. Would like to hear from any one who has seen him.—Address C. V. DANIEL, 1622 E. Lanvale St., Baltimore, Maryland.

NUZUM, JOHN (Jack). Last heard from in San Francisco, Calif., in 1913. 24 years of age, light complexion, index finger on right hand missing at middle joint; born in Elwood, Ind. May have enlisted in Army or Navy.—Address MRS. EFFA MACDONALD, 836 South Euclid Ave., Oak Park, Illinois.

THE following have been inquired for in full in either the Mid-April or First May issues of *Adventure*. They can get name and address of inquirer from this magazine.

ANDERSON, ALEX.; Branock, Ray, Branscombe, Earl; Butts, Chester H.; Cherrington, Don K.; Couth, Mrs. Mary; Davidson, Julius; Devers, L. W.; Edwards, Samuel; Grambrall, Theodore Chas.; Goodwill, Clifton C.; Hicky; Lacy, James E.; Larsen, Lawrence; Lessnaw, Joe; Mcgwown, Mackie; Magnus, Alf.; Millenhauer, Percy C.; Osborn, Lester E.; Pierce, Leighton; Pool, E. M.; Pringle, John A.; Smith, James; Stanton, Henry A.; Vinson, Edward; Warren, Harry O.; Watts, Earl L.; Whitlock, George W. (Sticks); Witter, L. P.; Witter, Lulu; Witter, Lillian M.

MISCELLANEOUS: Mr. McDonald, chief engineer, or any of engine room gang of tank steamer *Montana*; relatives of John Palmer; Attention, Boys of the 213 O. S. Bat. C. E. F., American Legion; Members of *Utah's* Old Signal gang. Also men in Russian transport service.

HASTLAR GALBREATH. Ruth Gilfillan; Lee Hayes; Jack P. Robinson.

NUMBERS L. T. 284, C. 293, W. 311, W. 312, L. T. 343. Please send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at addresses given us do not reach you.—Address HARRY ERWIN WADE, Care *Adventure*.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

You lovers of short stories! In the First June Number, which comes to you on May 3d, you will find twelve of them—besides the complete novel and a serial.

The Bully *By J. Allan Dunn*
In a logging-camp in the sawdust country you meet "*Bully*" *Egan*—and also another who though no physical match for him, does not give up hope.

The White Moths of Vizgayan *By Robert J. Pearsall*
Like bits of falling paper, a blanket of white, the moths flutter thickly in the air every evening—and the natives of Vizgayan tremble, for their coming means trouble.

Safe and Sane *By Gordon McCreagh*
Old "*Safe and Sane*" the young aviation students call *Rader* and some even doubt his courage. But *Rader* knows the rules and his duty.

Sirgarkh Rubies *By Arthur James Hayes*
The story of a hunt for the sacred rubies hidden away in a Chinese monastery in the heart of the great Gobi Desert.

Red Acadia *Part II* *By J. U. Giesy*
In the second part of this thrilling story, *Elliott* the British commissioner tires of the endless conference and plans to hurry things up—but the *White Wolf* has long ears.

Young Johnny Eistedt *By Kingsbury Scott*
Years of battling with the sea, erecting lighthouses and sea-walls have made *Old Man Tracy* a bulldog fighter. So when he dislikes the life-saving service *Johnny Eistedt* has no simple task converting him.

No Brains *By E. S. Pladwell*
When the Colorado Express loses both its fireman and brakeman at Mesquite station the mystery begins—and the further it is followed the worse it gets.

The Trouble-Maker of Ibbo *By Thomas S. Miller*
Into the pagan belt of Africa young *Ault* goes to fight fever, natives and renegades—and, as if that were not enough, to offset the workings of the *Trouble-Maker of Ibbo*.

At Twenty Fathoms *By Charles Brown, Jr.*
Way on the back of beyond, off the island of Kora Pai, you find *Downie*, hunting for pearl and trying to forget—but meeting adventures which he will never forget.

Disarmament *By William Carlton Davis*
Chute Gulch is a nice little town, except that its name should have been spelled differently. The minute you step foot into it things will begin to happen.

That Fool—Dave Hayden *By Henry Oyen*
"That fool, *Dave Hayden*" they call him in Alaska. But perhaps when you see him meet *Old Darragh Drake* you may decide otherwise.

The Red Witch *By Farnham Bishop and Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur*
Again the *Lady Fulvia* is called upon to protect herself and Rocca Forte—but this time the cost is heavy.

FIRST JUNE ADVENTURE

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If you lost your job

—if your income were cut off what would you do?

Augustus Van Gieson of New Jersey was employed by a big gas company. He was getting old—they wanted a younger man in his place, so out he went.

The same thing is happening to thousands of men every year. It may be your turn next.

What will you do?

Mr. Van Gieson didn't know where to turn. He must make a living. He hunted a job, but other companies wanted younger men, too, and he lacked capital to go into business for himself. The road ahead looked long and hard.

A few weeks later he saw one of our advertisements for local representatives. He wrote to us.

To-day he is his own boss. He goes and comes as he pleases. By looking after new and renewal magazine subscriptions of his friends and neighbors, he earns $1500.00 a year.

And by the same work, younger men and women who are looking ahead make from $3000.00 to $5000.00 a year.

Are you looking ahead?

Are you satisfied with your job?

Do you touch the $3000.00 mark?

You can!

ADVENTURE and EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE offer you an opportunity to build up a business of your own, right in your own locality. Begin now in your spare time. No experience is necessary. We tell you how, and furnish everything—free! Write us at once. The Ridgway Company, 109 Butterick Building, New York, N. Y.

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Increased His Earnings 800%

Followed the Suggestions Found in a Remarkable Book—Let Us Lend You a Copy—Send No Money

Not long ago Wilson M. Taylor, the noted efficiency expert loaned a copy of "Power of Will" to a young man of his acquaintance, with the result that the latter's salary increased 800% in less than a year.

Just think of it—within one year he was making eight times as much money as before he read this wonderful book—a book that Mr. Taylor says he wouldn't part with for $3,000 if he couldn't get another copy!

This is but one more example of the remarkable financial benefit that thousands of men and women in every field are securing through the application of the great success-achieving principles laid down for the first time in this wonderful book.

Among the users of "Power of Will" are such men as Judge Ben B. Lindsey; Supreme Court Justice Parker; Wu Ting Fang, ex-U. S. Chinese Ambassador; Lieutenant-Governor McKelvie of Nebraska; General Manager Christeson of Wells-Fargo Express Company; Assistant Postmaster-General Britt; E. St. Elmo Lewis; Governor Ferris of Michigan; Governor Capper of Kansas, and many others of equal prominence.

The Key to Fortune

Will Power is the keystone to success. It is the one qualification without which accomplishment in life is impossible. Man can accomplish what he wills—if he sticks to his purpose, but without unswerving determination he hasn't a chance. The will might well be termed the driving force behind the brain.

Until now the will has been neglected from the standpoint of development, yet it has been fully proven that the will is more susceptible to training than the brain or memory. If you held your arm in a sling for two years, it would become powerless to lift a feather from lack of use. The same is true of the Will—because we don't use it, it becomes scotched and dormant from lack of use. Yet anyone can easily develop his will to a wonderful power if he but knew how.

Frank Channing Haddock, Ph.D.

Personal Experiences

It would take a book as thick as this magazine to carry a full account of the amazing results secured by its users—here, however, are just a few extracts from the thousands of voluntary letters from owners telling what the book has meant to them.

800% Increase in One Year

"I recommended 'Power of Will' to a young man and his salary has increased 800% within a year."—*W. M. Taylor, Efficiency Expert.*

$1,500 to $50,000 Yearly

"Three years ago I was making $1,500 a year and working day and night. To-day I make $1,000 a week and have time for other things as well. To the lessons in the book 'Power of Will' do I owe this sudden rise."—*(Name on request.)*

Worth $3,000 to $30,000

"From what I have already seen I believe I can get $3,000 or $30,000 worth of good out of it."—*C. D. Van Vechten, Gen. Agent, North Western Life Ins. Co., Cedar Rapids, Ia.*

$897 Profit First Week

"'Power of Will' is a compilation of mighty forces. My first week's benefit in dollars is $900—cost $3; profit $897."—(Figure what his yearly profit would be.)—*F. W. Heistand, 916 Tribune Bldg., Chicago, Ill.*

50% Salary Raise

"First few pages enabled me to get 50% raise in salary."—*Robert B. Laird, Douglas, Wyo.*

Another 50% Increase

"More than a year ago I purchased 'Power of Will' and I firmly believe that it—and it alone—has enabled me to increase my salary more than 50% in that time."—*L. C. Hudgens, Principal Mayhew Consolidated Schools, Roswell, Okla.*

"POWER OF WILL"

by Frank Channing Haddock, Ph.D., a scientist whose name ranks with such leaders of thought as James, Bergson and Royce, is the first thorough course in Will Power ever conceived. It is the result of over 20 years of research and study. Yet you will find every page in the 28 lessons written so simply that anyone can understand them and put the principles, methods and rules into practice at once with noticeable results right from the very start.

May Transform Your Life

The users of "Power of Will" have experienced results through its study which border on the miraculous—it has enabled thousands to win out with big plans which they have worked on unsuccessfully for years—it has made active men of affairs out of pitiable downs and outs—it has transformed those who had always been the pawn of others into self-confident powerful leaders—it has enabled men and women held down by petty fears, by trivial daily incidents, to brush them aside as though made of papier-mâché—it teaches self-mastery—control of appetites and desires, and it has enabled strong, successful men by the thousand to accomplish *bigger things* by giving them even greater power to use in their dealings with others.

No matter what your occupation in life—no matter what your age—"Power of Will" can help you by giving you the power to become the dominant factor in your every undertaking. It invariably makes dreams come true—as over 225,000 men and women owners of "Power of Will" can tell you.

SENT FREE
No Money in Advance

Although "Power of Will" is a 400-page leather-bound book containing more material than many $25.00 correspondence courses, the price is only $3.00. The publishers will gladly send a copy free, for five days' inspection. Send no money now. Merely mail the coupon on the left, enclosing your business card or giving a reference. If you decide to keep the book, send the money. If not, mail the book back. Tear out and fill in the coupon now, before you turn this page.

PELTON PUB. CO.
48-J Wilcox Block
Meriden, Conn.

Gentlemen: Please send me a copy of "Power of Will" on approval. I agree to remit $3.00 or remail the book in 5 days.

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... *State* .....

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